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The Gift of
Rezin Augustus Wright
of the
Senior Class,
5 June, 1856.

THE WIFE

AND

WOMAN'S REWARD.

By

Mrs. Caroline Elizabeth [Sheridan] Norton

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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WOMAN'S REWARD.

CHAPTER I.

"Patience waits the destined day."
Bridal of Triermain.

A DAY or two before he left England, Lionel Dupré received by the twopenny post a fair and feminine-looking billet, which, perceiving to be signed with initials, and written in a cramped woman's hand, he flung down with a sneer of contempt and disgust. But immediately afterward it struck him that he had seen the same handwriting before, and though he could not recollect where, it came back to him as a pleasant remembrance. He picked up the crushed note, smoothed its pages, and read the following lines:—

"I am so deeply grieved at hearing of your illness, and thinking of the last day I saw you, that I cannot help writing to say so. *Try* not to think me forward, for indeed I only write because it may be a comfort to you to know that I have heart enough to be very, *very* sorry, in spite of the harsh words we said to each other. Take care of your health, and remember me, is the prayer of

"C. L."

"Yes, Clarice, you can write to me now—you can pity me now," thought Lionel, with some bitterness; "and if I die, you will recollect me as the man who made the first confession of love you ever heard—who

first made you conscious of the power of your own pernicious beauty; and you will speak of me to some later lover as 'Lionel Dupré, poor fellow!' But the dream is over, the charm is broken. I have forsworn you, Lady Clarice Lyle! I care not even to receive this token of your regret" (and he crushed the note again, and flung it from him). "I no longer sigh for your love; the strength which fed my passion is gone, and your pity is wasted on a dying man, who heeds it not."

In such a mood did Lionel depart; and in such a mood, combining as it did weakness, irritation, and despondency, it is not to be supposed that he could be otherwise than a most irksome travelling companion. Unwilling too, as he was, to allow his mind to brood over its real or imaginary grievances, he was continually occupying himself with trivial anxieties, which for the time assumed an intense importance. Restless and wretched, he fidgeted about all the little events and minor details of their journey, till Mary sighed for one sad and quiet hour wherein she might indulge in memories of the past, or contemplation of the future, without interruption.

He spent the first two stages of every day's journey in counting over again the bills which had already been paid, and consulting different estimates of the different rates of currency in the countries they were to pass through; and this he did not the least from economy, or a desire to save money. He was, and always had been, not only extravagant himself, but also (as long as it gave him no trouble, interfered with no favourite pursuit, and produced no present inconvenience) willing to be liberal to others. But he studied the currency, and wondered over each succeeding bill, because he thus secured to himself something to fret, and to fuss, and to fidget about; he was always looking for a lost book, or a mislaid paper-knife, or an undiscoverable travelling cap; always wondering whether the road they were going was really and actually the best road to the place of their destination, and calculating what hour they should arrive there; always abusing the last hotel-keeper, and swearing against the bore of a long

journey. No view, however beautiful, extorted from him an expression of pleasure; no evening, however calm or bright, ever soothed his feverish spirit into contemplation. He cared not for scenery:—the purple mountains fading into the sky beyond; the stretching shore, with its high cliffs, smooth sands, and rolling sea; the waving woods, with their thousand mingling and harmonious tints; the broad pasture-land and golden corn-fields; the slanting hill-side vineyards, and the white villages which dotted the distant plain; the winding and majestic river, or the leaping water-fall,—were all to him alike indifferent; his soul was cast in too *material* a mould.

Anger, and love, and hate—all human passions, found in his heart a wild and ready echo; and to "the pleasure of sweet sounds," the voluptuous enjoyment of music, his fancy yielded a ready obedience; but to the more refined and spiritualized enjoyments of our nature he was insensible; and as he roused Mary by some peevish exclamation at her silence, she wondered that the still sunshine, which rested in such glowing repose on the country they were traversing, had not also lulled *his* vexed spirit to temporary quiet.

It was remarkable, too, that the very occasion when Mary was making the greatest sacrifice for his sake was that on which he treated her with the least apparent kindness and affection. Violent, wayward, and selfish she had known him from his boyhood, with unequal fits of capricious tenderness between; but harsh, as yet, he had never been to *her;* and she shrank from the wounding speech or undeserved reproach with sorrowful surprise. She did her best to entertain him; but there *are* moments when utter depression so destroys the elasticity of our minds, that the effort we are most willing to make becomes impossible. Quiet and self-possessed as Mary was, and anxious to *seem* cheerful and composed, there were times when the sense of his words was lost to her ear; when she turned with a vacant and unmeaning smile to ask a repetition of the phrase, and her choked heart prisoned back its tears in an agony of unendurable regret.

It was after a long pause, during which the weary dragging of the carriage up a steep hill, with its grating, disagreeable sound, had prevented any attempt at conversation, that Mary made some eager and fanciful remark on the burst of beautiful landscape which the hill's summit afforded.

"Pshaw!" said her brother, peevishly, "what nonsense you do talk, Mary! I declare you are growing quite affected."

Mary Dupré's thoughts wandered back to England. She remembered the description William Clavering had once given of the Highlands, when talking of their *future*. Lord Clavering had a beautiful place in Scotland, close to one of the northern lakes, and she recollected her lover's expression,—"I feel, Mary, when I first see that lake, after the heat, and the noise, and the dust of London, as if my soul were suddenly spreading her wings." *Was* this nonsense? And if it were, *they* understood one another.

On descending the other side of the hill, they perceived a travelling carriage advancing in the opposite direction. No sooner had they met than both stopped; and a dispute arose between the postillions and the couriers, whether they should or should not be permitted to change horses—a favourite arrangement on the foreign roads, and one which to the habits of English travellers is particularly disagreeable.

Lionel was reading, and with dogged discontent grumbled at the interruption, but refused to interfere; the postillions insisted that no one would be found to drive the next stage, in the town they were coming to, unless these particular horses were allowed to return; and in the midst of the altercation, a gentleman in the other vehicle, who, like Lionel, had been occupied with a book, suddenly called out, in a low decided tone, "Silence! coquins; faites ce que vous voudrez, mais ne faites pas de bruit."

The accent was English, and Mary looked towards the speaker. He was a fine frank-looking young man, and by his side, leaning back in a deep and heavy sleep, was William Clavering!

Mary repressed the exclamation which rose to her lips; she saw not the stranger's gaze, bent earnestly and admiringly on her face; she only saw that pale and noble countenance, the thick dark lashes which hid from her those glorious eyes, and the compressed and grieved expression of the mouth which for *her* had ever worn a smile. He slept! She who had feared to lift her conscious eyes to his might gaze on him unchid, unquestioned. He slept, and dreamed not who was watching him!

The strange mixture of awe and idolatry which fills our breasts while gazing on the sleeping countenance of one we love stole over Mary's mind; that unexplained and o'er-mastering feeling which prompts us to exclaim, "Thou art mine, hushed soul! In thy mysterious rest; in thy forgetfulness of outward things; in thy unconsciousness of the nearness of the beating and adoring heart beside thee; in thy blindness to the presence of the watching eyes above thee; in the helplessness of thine hour of suspended existence, when thou art nothing to the busy world, and the world is nothing to thee—then art thou *mine!* Thy first startled glance is mine, thy first smile, the first ray of consciousness which shoots like the morning dawn over thy tranquil brow—these are all mine. I have earned them by the love-watch I have kept, while *thou* wert lost to the memory of human passion!"

And ere Mary had remembered how little it was hers to watch Clavering in sleep—to nurse him in illness, or to sooth him in sorrow (and his countenance bore traces alike of grief and indisposition)—ere she had recalled her wandering senses from their intoxicating dream of love—the jaded and rope-harnessed horses were already half a mile on their way.

There was nothing in fact extraordinary in their meeting, for she knew William Clavering was going abroad, and that by this time he was, probably, on his way home, after having arranged his lost brother's affairs. Nor was there any thing extraordinary in a tired and dispirited man sleeping heavily through the

bustle of changing horses; but on Mary's mind the interview fell with a sick and sad omen. That he should be utterly unconscious of her presence, while *she* was giddy with contending emotions, smote her to the heart; and seemed a prophecy how little, henceforward, he would share in her fate or her feelings.

CHAPTER II.

"Through the long day—the irksome day—
My heart impatient burns;
Still, as the slow hours glide away,
Thy voice—thy smile—returns!
I murmur when the morning light
Breaks in upon mine eye;
Give me the dark and shadowy night,
And, dreaming, let me die!"

THE well-remembered voice of Clavering roused Mary from her revery. "Mary," it said, "why should this fruitless struggle be made? why should I live lonely and far from you, who love you better than all earth's other blessings? why should you spend your wasted youth in devotion to one who wounds you with harsh words, and forgets all you have done for him? Leave him, Mary, leave all, and come with me! We will dwell together by the Rhine side, and every day shall pass in sunshine and soft words. There shall be no struggling, no regret, no tears. What! did you think I had in very deed and truth parted from you for ever? For ever! without one word, one sigh; without even the lock of your glossy hair which you promised me long ago! No, Mary; I left you, but only for a time, to feel what it would be, really, to part for ever! You *have* felt it; you have believed that you had looked your last on the face familiar for years; you have believed that you should see me no more; and now, confess, oh! confess, my Mary, that your heart was too much mine to bear such parting; confess that it would have broken, if all indeed had ended then; confess that you would brave all—bear all—rather than see me depart alone. Come! Mary, your brother sleeps, and dreams not of you; *I* wake, and watch, and hope. Come! and let us live happy together!"

She has followed him, and they glide together over the rapid Rhine, which lies half-asleep in the sunshine, like a merry child rocked to an enforced slumber. The noonday sun is hot, but Clavering is there! He shields her from the intolerable brightness of its beams, and places her where the white sail freshens in the breeze; where her undazzled eyes may turn to him and thank him.

Daylight declines, and evening comes slowly on. The crumbling towers of the old castle stand in their lonely beauty on the purple hill; while through the narrow window of the single and ruined arch the golden light of the mellow sunset comes slanting to the earth. Fire hath blackened, decay hath eaten, and man's fury hath defaced that tower; but the sunset calmly shines on, as it shone when armed men manned the castle battlements and mocked the enemy below.

Night's curtain falls, and evening steals away, while yet they glide over the blue river! The stars come out one by one, as the faint rose-colour of the dying sunset fades along the west. The last and faintest tint is gone, and the proud pale moon looks down upon the bosom of the forsaken waters. Mary and Clavering speak no more: the very beating of their hearts seems hushed by the quiet of that clear soft sky. Hand-in-hand they sit, gazing upwards with earnest glances at the motionless stars, and the rippling of waters beneath their bark is the only sound.

Lo! how the new morning comes, and chases the gloom of night! The cold mists hang upon the river; the mountain-tops are hid; and the dawning sun feebly pierces from time to time the veil which covers the earth. With slow and gradual rise that mist departs, and the giant hills look up, awaiting the glory of the full and perfect day. How chill and dewy feels the morning! But Clavering is there! Closer he folds the furred mantle round her; he holds her with his circling arm; her head leans lightly on his shoulder—cold cannot reach her now!

The bark glides on, cleaving the white mists with its glistening prow. Look, where the broad uprisen

sun bursts forth! Tower and crag are visible again. The vapour rolls away—is gone; and as the glow of sunshine passes over the face of nature, so to the cheek and heart of Mary and Clavering comes the thrilling and bounding consciousness of eager life. They rouse themselves, and gaze into each other's eyes: earth is beautiful, heaven is beautiful; but oh! the combined beauty of earth and heaven in their loveliest hours is nothing to the smile that ushers in the morning on the face of one beloved! "Welcome," it seems to say, "welcome to the renewal of life and love! Welcome to the light that dawns upon both! Welcome to the day which it is *ours* to spend together!" Such welcome is not for all, is not for many; but for those who *can* receive and give it, blessed are they.

The bark glides on: they pass the scattered villages and towns, with their gray spires and high narrow houses, glancing to the sun; and as they round that projecting rock, a scene of so much beauty bursts upon their eyes, that with one heart they wish to pause, and dwell there for ever.

The mountain rises almost perpendicularly from the waters, where its shadow falls like the purple mantle of a throned king. Beneath, the quiet village peeps from between the hills; and far, far above, on the proud summit, stands the ruined castle of some forgotten chief. The green vines climb up the steep sides, and leave that summit bare in the golden sunshine; and here and there by the water's edge a little boat lies moored.

All is still and majestic; and the merry voices of the peasant children, who come laughing down to the shore, alone break the calm repose of nature.

"Here let us dwell!" said Clavering.

And Mary's voice answered like a sweet echo of his own, "Here let us dwell!"

Their bark lies anchored on the quiet bosom of the Rhine. Its white sails are furled, and its scarlet flag flutters idly in the breeze, while they roam together among the hills of Germany. They are at the mountain's foot; and they read together old legends, wild

poetry, and the yet more valued histories of empires overthrown, countries differently divided, heroes who have left no name to hallow the spot where they bled, and kings whose lives were a long romance.

They are in the peopled villages, and talk to the peasants in a foreign tongue of the simple joys and sorrows which alone they can comprehend.

The sunburnt cheek of the young mother glows as they admire the laughing child at her feet: her dark eyes turn to the vineyard where her husband is toiling: she is impatient for his return, that he too may hear the voice of the stranger praising his son. And *they* forget the destinies of nations—the wild ambition, the barren successes, the bloody wars, of which they have been reading, as they listen to that peasant's words, and watch the eagerness of her loving eyes.

They are on the mountain's brow, and look down many a mile of the river's winding course: many a village and town, many a smiling valley, and many a blue hill, that mocks their cheated eyes as it mingles in the distance with the clouds around its head, lie spread before their sight. They wander among the crumbling stones of that nameless ruin, and people its walls with beings created by their own fancy, or glean from meager tradition a tale of mystery and tears. And the setting sun falls full upon Clavering's enthusiastic countenance, as he turns with a kindly smile to relate some wild romantic legend. He speaks, pointing to the lovely sky—

—That was a blessed dream!

Mary was awoke by the voice of her brother, who wanted to make some memorandum in his pocket-book, and had lost his pencil.

"I will lend you mine," said Mary, sadly; "and we can look for it when the carriage stops at the inn."

"Nonsense; you know I can't write with those tiresome leaden things: they break every moment—I want my own; it is a patent one, and the only one it suits me to write with. You are so provokingly forgetful as to where you put my things."

"Here it is," said Mary, as she suddenly perceived it

glittering in the folds of his traveller's cloak; and the effort to speak brought the tears to her eyes and the choking sob to her throat.

"What peevish creatures women are!" muttered Lionel Dupré, as he threw himself back in the carriage.

And Mary, as she also leaned back, and turned her tearful eyes away, clasped her hands, and thought, "It was a dream! and we *are* parted—parted for ever!"

CHAPTER III.

"I listen'd to thy careless tones
With a deep and fond despair—
As though the voice which answer'd thine
Had left its echo there;
I look'd into thine eager eyes
With a sad and swelling heart—
Because dark eyes had gazed on thine
Ere *we* were doom'd to part:
Forgive me for thine own mistake—
Alas! 'twas for *another's* sake!"

THE first person Lionel saw in his first attempt to walk down the esplanade at Nice was Lady Clarice Lyle.

The health of Lady Louisa was the real and ostensible cause for their coming abroad; but doubtless Lord Altonby had his own reasons for fixing their departure from England at the same time as Clavering's, and proposing to that gentleman to accompany his cousins as far as suited their different destinations, "in order that he might feel less lonely, and be better able to keep up his spirits."

It was with a cold and haughty bow that Lionel passed Lady Clarice the first day; and being, as we have already mentioned, no favourite with the marquis, he was not pressed to converse. But when, day after day, he saw her surrounded by idle Englishmen and mustached foreigners, the star and the goddess of the place,—when he saw those eyes, so childishly bright when he first knew her, stealing furtively and sadly up at him as he passed, and drop again as she listened with languid impatience to the compliments of her admirers,—when he remarked the coldness of Lord Altonby, and the sur-

prise of the more favoured guests at the marquis's table that the pale handsome young Englishman was not more welcome to his countryman,—then the mixture of vanity and passion, of jealousy and tenderness, awoke in Lionel's heart.

"She loves me still," thought he. "It is in my power to remove her from that swarm of whispering coxcombs; to brave that insolent old fool; to baffle the absent schemer Clavering; to prove to the sneering idiots who surround her that I *can* be what I *will*."

He altered his mode of proceeding; introduced his sister Mary to Lord Altonby; walked and rode by Clarice's side, and their love-quarrel was only remembered with a smile.

Still, in spite of the companionship of Mary, whose interest in Clavering's pursuits had made her quite capable of listening to, and understanding, the disappointed politician's discourse, the Marquis of Altonby could not bring himself to be fond of the cold and sarcastic Lionel; and the latter, impatient at an aversion which disturbed his continual enjoyment of the society of Clarice, took measures with that young lady by which he could see her uninterrupted and alone.

Young, romantic, and desperately in love, Clarice, who had seldom consulted any guide but her own inclinations, was easily persuaded to meet Lionel, while she was supposed to be visiting at the house of a mutual friend, Lady Dorrington, or inventing new songs to her guitar in her own apartment. The governess was infinitely more occupied with a young German baron (who actually wished to marry her!) than with her unmanageable charge; and found it more convenient to wink at the constant attendance of Mr. Lionel Dupré, than to be taunted by her spoiled pupil with the attentions of her own young lover.

Meanwhile Mary was not without *her* share of

conquest in this new field. She was a great acquisition (as a very agreeable Englishwoman must be), in a town like Nice, to the idle or invalided of her own country; and though the foreigners at first voted her *un peu froide*, and stood rather in awe of her, yet a very short acquaintance removed the prejudice.

The Greek purity of her features, and the repose and gentle cordiality of her manner, rose in a successful though unintentional rivalry with the dark espiégle eyes and vivacious manners of the French and Italian ladies; her style of singing, her way of speaking, were pronounced peculiar and charming; and the women, satisfied that she did not *wish* to outshine them, cheerfully allowed her beauty and her talents. In fact, they thought it did not signify a straw whether she was handsome and accomplished or not, seeing that she certainly did not intend to make use of these advantages. She was universally popular; and with no one more than with Lady Louisa Lyle, and the old Lady Dorrington, whom we have already mentioned as the supposed cause of Clarice's stolen hours of absence.

Lionel was proud and pleased at his sister's success. He remarked it to her, and added that he had always felt sure, if she had been known, instead of living the strange retired life she had done in London, she would have even *there* been noticed as superior to the generality of her sex.

Alas! to Mary, notice or admiration were alike indifferent; and while her name became gradually a familiar word, and it was thought odd and *barôque* not to be acquainted with the charming and accomplished Miss Dupré,—while it grew to be a fashion to crowd round her harp, and her presence was promised by the hostess of a fête, as security for a pleasant evening,—*she* sighed for the days when, taken as a favour from the Bigleys to be Mrs. Bolton's humble companion, William Clavering walked

from his chambers in the Temple, through the dark crowded Strand, to spend an hour by her side.

But of Mary's feelings on the subject no one thought, not even Lionel; or if he did, it was with the conviction that new amusements, new people, a new place, and new indulgences would soon put "all that d—d nonsense" out of her head. On him, at least, the sun of prosperity shone. A moderately rich young Englishman in our rich and commercial England is a man of immense wealth abroad; and as Lionel paid readily, and was profuse in his style of living, he passed as the possessor of boundless riches. His extraordinary beauty, too, had a due influence with the fairer sex, and many a passionate burst of tears from the vehement and jealous Lady Clarice, many a fond reproach and earnest prayer, were the disagreeable result of the very agreeable glances which followed him wherever he went, from the dark eyes of the easily-enamoured inhabitants of Nice.

Among the many new acquaintances made by Mary was one which particularly interested her—Frederick Atkins; the identical gentleman who was reading by Clavering's side the day they changed horses with the English berline. He was a pleasing, frank, high-spirited creature, and contrived to be a favourite even with Lionel, who piqued himself on not forming friendships with *nobodies*, and who could not, by dint of the strictest inquiries, discover more about him than that he was somebody's natural son; had been to college with William Clavering; and was attaché at the same court with his brother Henry, at the time the latter died.

Mary liked him. She was not indeed at first aware that he was the individual who had accompanied Clavering on his journey, for her gaze had never wandered from the slumbering countenance of her lost lover; but she thought him pleasant. He belonged to the same *school* as William Clavering,

had read the same books, admired the same passages, held the same opinions; and, with an inferior understanding and less resolute disposition, had yet something of Clavering's nature about him. He was a welcome visiter, and a favourite companion, and it was not till some time after their acquaintance had ripened into intimacy, that she became aware they had previously met.

They had been discoursing of the plagiarisms of which Milton is accused by the compilers of his poems, and a chance word (one of those knells which ring up so many thousand associations) brought back to Mary's mind some observations of William Clavering's, the day they had read the Comus together. That day returned with its visionary happiness; she heard his voice—she saw his smile—she remembered the compliment which had made her heart beat so hurriedly, and her eye quail so suddenly. Thought, with its lightning speed, went through succeeding scenes of mingled trial and joy, till at the last and bitterest—their parting hour—Mary became lost in a mournful revery.

"I know—I recollect now where I first saw you," said Frederick Atkins suddenly; "I always declared I *had* seen you, and as I have not been in England for years, my friends told me it was impossible. You were in a carriage which changed horses with another, on the road from —— to ——?"

"Yes," said Mary.

"Ah!" said her companion, as he fixed his eyes on her sad and quiet countenance, "I thought then, that, let me meet you when and where I would, I should immediately recognise you; but you have baffled me till this moment, your expression is in general so cheerful, so composed. You have no idea what a melancholy earnestness there was in your face that day; and so much more colour in your cheek. I do not think you even *saw* us, you were

in such a deep study. Do you remember the circumstance?"

The sudden question startled Mary out of her habitual reserve and composure. Her eye grew moist with tears, a hectic crimson flushed her cheek, and as she looked up at Frederick Atkins her lips parted with a quivering and painful smile. The "*si je m'en souviens!*" of Clotelde de Surville, had not more poetry in it than that single glance. It was but for a moment; the excited expression faded from her face, and left her pale, quiet, and composed as ever; but from that hour a change, slight perhaps and involuntary, but perceptible to her new friend, crept into Mary's manner. Her eye brightened when Frederick Atkins appeared; the causeless colour came and went in her cheek at some unmeaning phrase or casual observation dropped by him. If he watched her, she seemed to shrink from his scrutiny; and yet her manner was one which encouraged him. Her gentle welcome had a familiar tenderness in it to him, which was given to none besides; and she would turn from the wittiest and most brilliant of a brilliant circle to listen to his most commonplace remark. Frederick Atkins was no coxcomb, but he could not resist the conviction that Mary saw and returned a partiality which with him became stronger each succeeding day. He had even caught her eyes fixed on him when he suddenly turned, and had heard her sigh as she withdrew her gaze. (How many a man has appropriated to himself a sigh given to the memory of another!)

In spite of all proofs of a return on Mary's part, the declaration of attachment which Frederick Atkins at length ventured to make was received with great and apparently painful surprise. No longer so cool and collected as in younger days,—her nerves shaken by perpetual struggles, and her spirit weakened by concealed and enduring sorrow,—Mary only shook her head faintly and burst into tears, when her new

lover made an eager offer of his heart and hand; but when he proceeded to allude to his circumstances, and informed her that he was Lord Altonby's natural son, and by his father's will was entitled to a good fortune; that Lady Clavering, during her lifetime, when Lord Altonby had no other child, treated him in all respects as one of her own sons, and requested her husband to allow him to be the constant companion of the young Claverings; when, with the sensitiveness peculiar to his position, he dwelt upon the advantages of society, &c., that this friendliness on the part of both families gave him, and fondly sought to prove to his hearer that her position would be even better when married to him than at present, —Mary stopped him.

Her manner was different from any he had ever seen her adopt; it was wild, rapid, and agitated. "You have known William Clavering all your life—you love him?" said she.

"As the dearest of brothers; and such he always was to me."

"Then for *his* sake forgive me! I have not willingly deceived you; I have not knowingly led you on step by step to this confession; I have been a blind and selfish, but not an intentional, cause of vexation to you. I have welcomed you as *his* friend, I have loved you as *his* companion; we were engaged—a miserable accident broke it off—my brother hated him—and I believed I was doing my duty to my lost father in abiding by the child his dying lips left to my care. But though I may never see his face again, I am still *his*, heart and soul for ever. Do not hate me! it has been a comfort to me to see you day by day; and if I have misled you, pity and forgive me!"

In all the sudden and bitter disappointment of the moment, Frederick Atkins retained his generosity of feeling: he soothed and comforted his weeping companion; besought her to consider him as a friend, a

brother; to forget what had passed between them, and to believe in his unchanging esteem and regard: he comprehended instinctively how powerful the feeling must have been which forced from one so proud and so reserved that passionate confession and appeal; he felt for the bowed and broken spirit which permitted her woman's tongue to tell the tale; and he was eager in his endeavour to prove to her that he alone was to blame in having misunderstood her motives.

Mary smiled mournfully on him through her tears. "And now," said she, in a faltering voice, "one word more, and I have done: I have said to you what I never thought to say to human being; I fear far more than death any open quarrel between my brother and William Clavering; do not let the words uttered in my agony find their way to *him;* do not repeat what has been wrung from me this day. I am changed, and weak, and foolish, or it could not have happened—you promise me?"

"I *do* promise!" and Mary was left alone.

The vexation and anxiety caused by this event were speedily swallowed up in one of more importance. At the beginning of the carnival Lionel Dupré had given a masked ball with superb illuminations, to which all in the dull town of Nice, who were capable of enjoying so fatiguing a gayety, were invited. Lord Altonby and his daughters were there as a matter of course, and the success of the fête was such, that a repetition of it was enforced by a hundred nimble tongues and eloquent billets. While Lionel yet hesitated, during an animated discussion which took place in Lord Altonby's drawing-room, Lady Clarice stole towards him, and bending till her coral lips almost touched his ear, she whispered one long hesitating sentence. The colour went and came on Lionel's cheek, and he consented to fix a day for a fête yet more magnificent than the preceding.

That day arrived, and fully justified the most ardent expectations. Lady Clarice Lyle was attired as Psyche, and, as her father very justly remarked, was a vision of beauty, "such as the prime minister of any country might be proud to call his own." She was the star and idol of the ball, and her name was inscribed in small green lamps over a portico wreathed with myrtle and tuberoses. The music floated merrily from the dancing-room to the terrace, and light laughing voices were heard from time to time between its pauses. Mary Dupré, Frederick Atkins, and Lady Louisa Lyle (who was not yet sufficiently strong to indulge in the exercise of dancing) sat together, quiet spectators of the scene. Presently the beautiful Psyche, breathless and flushed with incessant waltzing, came towards them; she passed her arm round her sister's neck, and stood for a moment silently gazing at the moving crowd.

"Are you tired, Clarice?" said Lady Louisa.

"No—yes."

The dispirited tone in which she spoke struck her companions. Mary looked up, and saw that her eyes were filled with tears. Apparently her sister made the same remark; for in another moment she said anxiously, "Has any thing vexed you, dearest?"

"No, nothing has vexed me," answered she, hurriedly, and she passed her hand across her eyes. "A beautiful night—a happy night—is it not? but I am a little tired: my *wings* ache," added she, laughing. She sat down as she spoke, and leaned her head for a moment upon her sister's shoulder. "Give me your bouquet, Lisa, it is fresher than mine," murmured she.

"Certainly; here it is."

"And here is mine for *you*," said Clarice, jumping up; "mind you keep it till you see me again; I am going to dance now;" and in a few minutes they saw her whirling through the giddy waltz, as light and as lovely as the spirit she was attired to represent.

The evening wore away; the guests departed; the hitherto crowded rooms were thinly peopled with scattered dancers. "I am tired to death," said Lady Louisa Lyle; "I wonder my father and Clarice do not appear."

Lord Altonby came as she concluded her sentence; he looked puzzled and displeased. "I cannot find your sister anywhere," said he; "I really must beg that this may not occur again: she is nearly seventeen, and much too old to play at hide and seek like a romping child."

A vain search was made; the master of the house was also missing, and the truth became clear. Lionel had eloped with Lady Clarice, as the shortest way of securing the very doubtful consent of her father!

That father's distress was bitter, was vehement; and in the expressions he made use of—in the utter confusion of his love for his child, and his political schemes for his beautiful daughter—in his appeals to Heaven, and his allusions to such of his friends as were expected shortly to be in power—in his frantic declaration of pursuing the young deserters, and his lament over the uselessness of the pains he had taken with Clavering,—there was something so ludicrous that it would have called up a smile, but that the bystanders remembered that it *was* a father who mourned for his child.

On Mary he poured out the whole fury of his soul. In vain she protested her ignorance; in vain she endeavoured to sooth him, and assured him of her sympathy with bitter tears; in vain she endeavoured to stem the curses which were heaped on her brother. Lord Altonby could not believe that all had been planned and executed without accomplices; and when the weeping Lady Louisa stretched out her hand and murmured, "*I* believe you," he rudely dragged her away.

There was silence; the lights went out one by

one; the withering wreaths of flowers looked bruised and pale in the daylight, and a few faint illuminated letters were all that remained of Clarice's name.

Mary sat, her face buried in her hands; her thoughts wandering she scarcely knew where. "Surely we were to live together—to be all in all to each other! Surely he knelt to me, and persuaded me to give up all, and dwell with *him;* and now—where is he?"

She uncovered her face, and looked up. Frederick Atkins was standing near, leaning against the pillars of the doorway.

"Pray go to rest now," said he, "if it is only to nerve yourself for to-morrow. They must have left letters or messages with some one, and only wish to gain delay. See, I have summoned your maid. You will go to rest, will you not?"

And Mary wrung his hand, and left him.

Lord Altonby sent messengers to Rome, to Florence, to Naples. He described his daughter's beauty, her peculiar costume: he applied to the police: he offered enormous rewards—but in vain.

Lady Clarice had gratified at once her passion for Lionel and her passion for disguises—her love for a stranger and her love for doing something strange; had baffled pursuit by a girl's mad fancy more completely than skill or thought could have done, and in the dress of a peasant-boy (her very hair matching the short auburn curls of her lover, who was similarly attired), they had sailed direct for Sicily!

In the bouquet given during the ball by Clarice to her sister were a few hurried lines, imploring her to procure pardon for the step she was about to take, and to persuade her father to receive Lionel as a son-in-law, with some passionate expressions of affection for the sister she was forsaking. A *P.S.* had been added, in which she said, she reproached herself when she thought of Mary Dupré; and begged "dear Louisa" to ask "dear Lady Dorrington," for

"poor Clarice's" sake, to invite Mary to her house till she should write again.

Lionel had not apparently reflected on the utterly unprotected situation in which he had left his sister Mary. Neither line nor letter could be found from him; only a formal note from the bankers' informed her that for the present *her* signature to the circular bills was to be taken in lieu of Mr. Dupré's, by that gentleman's orders.

Lady Dorrington, who was a fat, kind, highly-rouged old lady, who played whist and écarté in a scarlet turban and flaxen wig every night, did immediately what poor Clarice had so unceremoniously requested.

Mary discharged most of her brother's servants—had the house shut up—and, for want of a better alternative, accepted the offered protection, with many thanks for a stranger's kindness and consideration.

Her heart softened towards Lady Clarice when she found that, such as it was, this little scheme had been *her* thought. And the doubtful feelings respecting her brother, which Mary never confessed even to herself, might have been guessed at, could any one have overheard her solemn ejaculation in favour of his bride—"God grant, poor little creature, that your rash attempt to work out your own happiness may answer!"

CHAPTER IV.

"I would be at the worst;—worst is my port,
My harbour, and my ultimate repose."

MILTON.

AFTER a while, Mary received a long, affectionate, and explanatory letter from her brother, with a few lines added by Clarice, hoping that her future home with them would be too happy to allow of her regretting or resenting her brother's sudden disappearance.

They declared their intention of remaining in Sicily till Lord Altonby should either forgive the young couple, or himself depart from Nice.

The latter event soon took place, and Mary received, with a tearful welcome, the runaway bride and her husband.

Clarice persisted that her father could not live without her, and would soon send for her home; and Lionel, satisfied with being in the first intoxication of a real passion, and feeling also that he was a much greater man at Nice than in London, resolved to await the expected summons from his wife's family where he was.

And thus two years rolled away, the message of forgiveness coming much more slowly than could have been anticipated by Lady Clarice, who knew not how much of policy and politics mingled with her father's evident affection and admiration for her.

In Lady Louisa Lyle's letters to her sister, which were frequent and kind, many grieving allusions were made to the determined silence preserved by the marquis on this subject; and she added that even

Clavering's entreaties were of no avail, though he took advantage of his knowledge of her father's weak point to praise very highly Mr. Dupré's talents, and to assure him that eventually he would be a distinguished man.

Clavering was mentioned in all these letters, and Lady Clarice used to read them aloud to Mary, still preserving the habit of crouching down at the feet of the person she was endeavouring to entertain.

His pursuits, his abode, his anxieties, and his success were thus faithfully, though unintentionally, forwarded to Mary. And when his father's death left him almost alone in the world, it was a satisfaction to her to hear that the new Lord Clavering lived almost entirely with his uncle, Lord Altonby, and thus obtained a little quiet society, and the shadow of a home, to prevent his feeling entirely alone.

Nor was it possible at such a moment that Mary's thoughts should not revert with renewed bitterness to the circumstances which had divided them. It is ever a grinding and a wearing sorrow to be forced to live separated from what we love best, even when we know that they are happy, and in good health. But to feel that they are in sorrow, and we may not comfort them; in sickness, and we cannot be near them; in anxiety, and we cannot share it with them:—*this* is a sorrow which is unendurable.

The hour of supposed mirth, when others amuse, others interest, and others occupy them, may excite a vague jealousy, which we struggle against as unworthy of our better natures; but the hour of imagined loneliness, when fancy shows us that sad brow gazing into the cheerless fire of a solitary hearth, or bending listlessly over the uncompanioned task of studying a favourite author,—the hour of sickness and danger, when we see as in a painful vision the parched lip cooled by a draught from another's hand —the feverish eye lifted to another's face—the languid

head, lifted by another's care;—*these* are the hours which madden and wring our hearts, which teach us wild and impossible plans for uniting our destinies to those we love—which throw a false light and shade over human objects, reversing and magnifying their order and importance;—*these* are the hours in which we act that which we live to repent, or die to expiate.

And even Mary, whose regulated feelings had been chastened by a life of continued trial, whose sobered imagination calmly reflected the images from without—even she, when she had stolen from the home where her presence was no longer so incessantly required, to a lonely spot by the sea, where she might muse without interruption, forgot for a time the *real* in the *ideal*. Bending her vacant eyes on the blue waves that rippled to the shore, she would image to herself words and looks, long ago forgotten perhaps even by him who so occupied her thoughts—(for when did man ever recall a dream of love with woman's memory?). She wrote his name and threw it on the waters, as if imagining that a floating message could be borne to that distant land; and when the breeze, which had scarcely force to curl the tiny waves, returned the fluttering and unmoistened paper, her heart sank, as if at an evil omen. She, who in stronger and happier days had so scorned—no, not scorned, she was too gentle for the feeling—but had so wondered at the same species of folly in others, bowed an unwilling slave to the dreamy excitement of hopeless passion. Her yearning heart flew back to England and to Clavering with feverish longing, and it seemed to her that it was for their hour of meeting that she lived. No definite view—no plan of hope—no vision of sharing his home, mingled with that strong desire; she was too wretched to make a future. To see his face—to hear his voice—to weep by his side—and then—what then? she

knew not, cared not—after that visionary meeting all was blank—to kneel by his side and die!

Meanwhile, the married existence of the young and lovely Lady Clarice was not without storms. After the first flush of romance and passion had subsided, Lionel showed the same selfishness and occasional forgetfulness towards his wife that he had ever done to all who surrounded him. He became impatient of contradiction, and easily roused to anger; sneers and harsh words were spoken, which once uttered are often repeated, and involuntarily remembered even through hours of tenderness; with an unequal and arbitrary exertion of authority, he indulged her wildest whims, when he himself was in the mood to endure them, and repressed at other times her most harmless wishes: and the result was, as might be expected, that Clarice grew even more unreasonable and ungovernable than formerly; and that disputes the most childish, in which neither would give way, ended, on his part, by a cold and bitter sneer, and on hers by a phrensy of delirious passion. Clarice's violence was heightened by a continual and persevering jealousy; accustomed to be as much an only child as if she had never had a sister, to be thought a miracle of beauty and talent, and every word noted and set down in the memory of those around her, she exacted the most incessant and unwearied attention, which Lionel was not always disposed to pay. He had baffled his rival—he had braved his superior—he had won the object of his love—and his thoughts now reverted to himself.

This all-pervading feeling Clarice saw not. She *had* talent, but it was of that peculiar sort which consists in a vivid fancy and great quickness of comprehension, or power of seizing rapidly what others would take the trouble to explain; what was unexplained she saw not at all. With a great deal of imagination, she had no observation whatever; and

her vanity increased her blindness on certain points. For instance, it never occurred to her to study Lionel's disposition to *others*. Slight or neglect to herself she saw and felt immediately, and resented it bitterly; but neglect shown to others she perceived not, and therefore it was that while Lionel's occasional harshness was to her unaccountable, her angry and puzzled spirit drew a thousand wrong inferences, and that she attributed to inconstancy of preference what, if she had been able to judge more clearly, she would have seen resulted from absorbing selfishness;—a selfishness suspended for a time by a stronger passion, and gradually flowing back into its accustomed channels, to chill, not only her, but all who depended on Lionel's affections. There was not a woman in Nice who had not, at one time or other, excited Clarice's jealousy; there was not an acquaintance who had not been made the subject of reproach to her husband, and of wild and passionate complaint to her patient and enduring sister-in-law.

These disputes, however, though violent when they occurred, were not frequent. Clarice really adored Lionel, and Lionel liked his wife, even now, better than any thing, even his sister Mary. She had also a power over him stronger than affection in the heart of a selfish man—she amused him; he could not have lived a day without being gazed at by those strange, wild, intelligent eyes; listening to that rapid enumeration of odd fancies and romantic dreams; and watching the restless eagerness of her graceful movements. All that excitability of mind and manner which Clavering saw with regret and disapprobation had a charm for Lionel; it amused him to watch and guess her, as it might have amused him to watch the habits and instincts of some playful and beautiful animal. He never checked her, except when she bored him; he never advised her to be quiet, except when he himself was weary; he would have stared in surprise, could Clavering have com-

municated to him his doubts and fears on the subject of her future. It added to his present happiness that Lady Clarice should be what she was,—the strangest compound of good and bad, of cleverness and mad folly, of weakness and strength, that ever came into this teeming world; it added to his present happiness (which was to be found in strong excitement) that his wife should be something between an adoring woman and a termagant child; and whether it was eventually to add to or to take away from *hers*, he never thought, and scarcely cared.

We have seen that Clavering doubted his power to alter the "ways" of his lovely cousin during their companionship at Lord Altonby's. Perhaps he was right—perhaps in that wayward disposition impulse would ever have been stronger than reason or affection; and he might have lived to regret the experiment, which so much charm and fascination had tempted him to make. Such women, in romances, break their hearts and die; such women, in real life, destroy the destinies of others, and live. But be that as it may, the ruin of heart and disposition in one who, from the beginning, was less fitted for a wife than a mistress, was more rapid and certain under the *no*-care of Lionel, than it could have been under the firmly indulgent guardianship of Clavering.

Nor was Mary's natural good sense, or her acquired opinions, of service in the present instance. Unaccustomed to enjoy the society of a young female companion, naturally indulgent, and conscious that her own girlhood had been prematurely saddened into thoughtfulness, she allowed the charm of a new affection to steal over her heart, excusing all of which she was forced to disapprove, by the thought of the extreme youth of the offender, and involuntarily perhaps yielding to the fascination of the unequalled beauty of Clarice's imploring and tearful face, when, conscious of having erred, she came like a sorrowful child to be forgiven.

For nearly three years matters continued in this state, but in the third year of his marriage circumstances occurred which made Lionel anxious to return to England. Lady Clarice Dupré was soon to become a mother.

Perhaps the only few months in which Lionel actually forgot himself in a keen anxiety for the comfort of another, were those in which he was occupied taking care of the wild young creature who never took care of herself, and during this time she acquired more than ever the habit of having her own way. Her whims were law, her caprices necessities: and the man who from his infancy had allowed nothing to control him, became the slave of all a pretty woman's fancies.

Let it not be thought that the character of such a man could suddenly alter. It was not *all* fondness and fear for the fragile girl who was to be his child's mother; nor was it the deep and *planning* tenderness of a young father for his expected son. Lionel had already been a father—the father of Annie Morrison's lost baby, Frank; and we have seen that he cared little for the existence of that pledge of early love and selfish treachery. But with Lady Clarice's infant came other dreams. Moreton Park became an hereditary possession. His connection with the great and noble families of Altonby and Clavering seemed more certain and acknowledged. The obscure merchant's son claimed good blood in his mother's right, and his name was to be a known name in England. Lord Altonby might still persist in refusing to forgive his daughter, but she was not the less the mother of a marquis's grandchild—of an earl's grandnephew. Lionel triumphed—he exulted—he prayed that it might be a son; and he determined to take Lady Clarice to Moreton, that his heir might be born there.

A letter had just been despatched to Lady Louisa, begging her to state Lady Clarice's situation, and

make one more appeal to her angry father, when two letters addressed to the expecting mother were brought; one in the handwriting of her sister, and the other, to her astonishment, that of her father himself. Eagerly she opened the latter—she saw that it was a summons home, and flung down the few formal lines to read her sister's.

From habit Clarice read aloud, and from habit and obstinacy she persisted in sitting on the low ottoman at Mary's feet, while she made her partaker of the contents of her letter. On the present occasion Lionel was beside her, tenderly supporting her, and soothing her into quiet at every fresh ejaculation of amazement and joy. Lady Louisa's letter was a very hurried one.

"Come home, my own sweet sister—come home, Clarice; if you can read the blotted words, through my tears of joy, come home! Strange things have happened, and joyful; the gladdest of all is the thought that I shall see your dear bright face again. But I must tell you, as connectedly as I can, what has occurred. Yesterday, at dinner, Clavering was particularly sad: it was the anniversary of his brother Henry's birthday, and he scarcely spoke a word; at last my father said, 'Come, William, this will never do; finish your glass, and we will go to the drawing-room, and Lisa shall play the harp to cheer you.'—(I have practised the harp a great deal since I grew strong and well.) For a minute or two Clavering did not answer—and then he sighed (oh! such a heavy sigh), and he leaned his head on his hand and said, 'There are few things that cheer me now.' Well, I don't know how it was, but I was so vexed at seeing him in such low spirits, and so hurt at the thought that *I* could not cheer him (for you recollect how merry he used to be with you), that I burst into tears. Then of course I was very much

ashamed of such a folly; and I left the dining-room very quickly, and went to my own room.

"In about ten minutes my father came to me, so flurried and so happy, and called me his kind and blessed child, and the sweet names he used to give *you*, Clarice; and then he told me Clavering wanted to marry me, and that half his sadness was the doubt whether I would accept him! To doubt that!—I certainly never thought of him, or, indeed, of any man,—I thought myself too plain, and too foolish—it never came into my mind to look forward to any marriage but yours, bright and beautiful sister; but when it *was* told to me, I was so wildly happy that I felt I must have loved him all along.

"I was very much frightened, and wished to put off seeing Clavering till the next morning; but my father took me down-stairs with *him*, and William rose as I came in, and took my hand in a kind quiet way, and said, with a smile, 'I hope you have said *yes*.' I scarcely remember what I answered, but I know I thanked him for thinking of me, and said a number of things *you* would have thought too humble and silly, Clarice, for a woman; but you had more right to be proud than I. Then he sat down by me, and said a great many encouraging things about my disposition, and the comfort I should be to him, and that he would show me that he knew how to value a home. He must have thought me very foolish, for I could not help crying, and I could not speak; but it was a great happiness to sit by him, holding his hand, and settling our future plans.—(*Ours!* oh, Clarice, think of poor *me* living to be Clavering's wife!)—Though even then he seemed sad and abstracted—I felt almost sure at one time that he forgot I was by him; and he started so when I spoke, and said, 'I beg your pardon,' in such a cold strange voice.—Oh! I hope he loves me! If he did not indeed, why should he wish to marry me?—but when I think how clever and perfect he is, all this

seems a happy dream; however, since it has been told to the few friends I have seen, I find it is no surprise to any one but me.

"Old Lady Latimer laughed, and said I must be very simple not to have seen that my father always meant him for one of us, and that people expected nothing else, living, as we have done lately, so much together; and Clavering having no one to gladden him but ourselves. I never liked old Lady Latimer, she always takes such a cold harsh view of things; and even if my dear father did wish Clavering to marry me, he could not oblige him to do it unless it suited him, and I hope he will never have cause to repent making me his wife. It will be such happiness to me to see him smile again! I never saw any smile like his—so noble and proud, and yet so full of kindliness.

"How selfishly I have written! How I have run on talking of my own happiness, and forgetting yours!

"The moment it was all settled, my father told me that I might write to you, and tell you he forgave every thing; and wished you to return. He will not consent to delay the wedding, because he imagines that, perhaps, Mr. Dupré may not choose immediately to return; but he will meet you at Paris, as soon as he receives news of your coming over; and then I hope you will come to Clavering Park, to your ever affectionate sister,

"LOUISA."

Lord Altonby's letter was more concise:—

"MY DEAR CLARICE,

"You *were*, as you well know, my favourite child, till you chose to unite yourself with a young man without rank or family, and totally destitute of any weight or influence whatever. You have deeply grieved and unexpectedly disappointed me; but at

this moment of success, when your excellent sister is about to unite herself with a man who, I doubt not, will eventually be the leader of the Whig party, as he is already its ornament and support, I cannot resist her entreaties to recall you to your home. Trusting that you will return in good health, and that your husband will endeavour to distinguish himself, which Clavering tells me is very possible,

"I remain your affectionate,
"though mortified father,
"ALTONBY."

It must not be supposed that the vivacious Lady Clarice read these letters uninterruptedly, as they are here set down. A thousand exclamations of wonder, of triumph, and of delight broke every sentence, and closed almost every paragraph. As her task was completed, she clasped her hands, and said, "Well, I am so glad Lisa is to be married! I always thought she would be an old maid; though she is very pretty, with a *pale* prettiness;" and Clarice stole a glance in an opposite mirror, at her own beaming and glowing face. "Somehow, I had never thought of her marrying; but I am delighted it is to be. I could not bear to be an old maid myself. An old maid is always neglected and overlooked; she is always made of use to everybody, and yet she is nobody's *first object*,—I could not bear that!"

Mary had heard all—she had drunk in every syllable—she had felt all the bitterness of the sudden blow, and received all the consolation which could be afforded, by the sentence in Lady Louisa's letter which alluded to Clavering's sadness and abstraction, even when arranging his marriage; and by the conviction that Lord Altonby had probably taken advantage of his daughter's tears, on the occasion referred to, to work upon his nephew's feelings, and persuade him the best cure for his depressed spirits would be

the presence of a young and affectionate wife. But what could that avail to comfort her?

She shrank away—she dared not weep; she prisoned back the hot tears under her burning eyelids; she turned away her pale and haggard cheek, that her companions might not witness her emotion. She trembled lest Clarice should wonder, lest Lionel should reproach himself for her sake. Alas! poor Mary! the painful effort was needlessly made—in the excitement of the hour *she* was forgotten. Clarice dreamed of her home, her father, and her sister. Lionel, in fancy, stood on his own estate, lighting bonfires for the birth of his infant heir. Neither of her companions heeded her faint and heavy step as she crept from the room to weep in solitude; neither of them chided her silence, or entreated her to stay. *She* had no share in the schemes of her brother, or the glad expectations of his bride; *she* was to be alone in England as she had been at Nice; her youth was fleeting by, and she was no longer any one's *first object*.

CHAPTER V.

"Why shouldst thou weep? why struggle? why complain?
Why evermore gaze forward or look back?
'Tis all determined for thee, all arranged,
Ere those dim eyes were open'd to the light;—
It is thy fate, weak heart, it is thy *fate!*"

When Lady Clarice Dupré arrived in England her sister and Lord Clavering were absent; the latter having taken the opportunity of his marriage to visit his Irish estates.

Their meeting was therefore deferred for a while; and while the impatient Clarice resented, regretted, and reproached, in a breath, this unintentional slight, Mary rejoiced that time was allowed her to think of the lover of her youth as the husband of another, before she was perhaps compelled to see him. She began to dread meeting him again as much as she formerly desired it; and from time to time a vague and desponding wish crossed her mind to hide herself in a remote corner of the world, and live or die, as it might please God, in quiet obscurity.

The worry and vexation of the occasional disputes between Lionel and his wayward bride were trying to a person naturally, as well as habitually, of composed and peaceful habits. Nor can it be denied that many causes contributed to make Mary less patient under small vexations than heretofore. She no longer felt so necessary to her brother's every-day happiness, as, in spite of transient misunderstandings, she had always done before he married. She had no longer the elasticity of hope, which, by brightening the future, makes present trials easy. Her cheek lost its smoothness; her step became jaded and slow; her

voice varied from a low dispirited murmur to abrupt and sharp tones, such as it had never before known; and she no longer exerted herself so cheerfully for the entertainment or comfort of others.

At length Lionel's fondest wishes were realized. Lady Clarice became the mother of a lovely boy; and the tenantry of Moreton roasted an ox whole, lit bonfires, and drank his health with such deafening cheers, that the sound faintly reached the curtained and shady room where the tiny object of their rejoicings lay, wrapped in rich muslin mantles, and buried in the down cushion of his cradle.

To most young couples, the "unto us a child is born" seems something so astonishing and remarkable, that one would imagine they had never looked forward to it as a probable result of their union, nor even observed that their friends also had children. Every young father and mother looks upon their "first baby" as Adam and Eve must have looked at Cain (that first specimen of a man-child born into the world)—with delight, wonder, and something of triumph in their own creative ingenuity.

And it is a happy instinct which enables us to value these little prizes so highly; and a curious thing to reflect, as we stumble through the Parks knee-deep in children, that there is not one little unit in those diminutive millions that has not (God bless it!) a circle of admiring relatives to whom it is the prettiest, the dearest, the cleverest—in fact, the *only* child that ever was worth a thought.

But no infant that ever was cradled (no, not even the heir to a throne) could have obtained more exclusive and devoted attention than Charles Lyle Saxelby Dupré, infant son and heir to Lionel Dupré, Esq., of Moreton Park, Yorkshire.

The most extravagant costliness was visible in all that surrounded him; gold pap-boats and lace robes; satin embroidered coverlets and white plumes—all that the invaluable nurse, who had lived with the

Duchess of Montarlington when she had *her* first baby, considered advisable and requisite to enable her to do justice to "the little cherub;" and, in justice to that respectable person, it should be allowed that the little cherub throve under her management *almost* as well as if a rosy farmer's wife had nursed it at her own cottage door in the sunshine of the open day.

Clarice was enchanted: and though nothing could be less motherly and matronly than her ways with her baby; though she occasionally pulled him out of his cott, and kissed him awake, that she might show how very blue his eyes were; though she insisted on letting him taste caudle and christening-cake, and was caught by the nurse dipping a feather in a glass of wine, that he might thus moderately drink the health of the assembled company;—still she passionately loved her child; and it amused Lionel excessively to see her steal into a corner, and crouching down as if she had brought a kitten to play with, sing wild extempore songs to it, sometimes expressive of her own affection, and sometimes in a prophetic spirit tracing out its career to manhood and old age. Every possible and impossible fate was shadowed forth in these lullabies; and every day she wove a new one.

One day, as she sat at Lionel's feet watching the pretty features of the little being in her arms, she suddenly said, "What a strange feeling it must be, my own Leo, not to love the father of one's child."

"What made you think of that, Clarice?"

"I don't know exactly. I was looking at my baby, and wondering whether he would be like you or me, and hoping it would be like *you*. Oh! you cannot think how I love it when it lifts its little eyebrows, and makes a wild startled eye like you when you are surprised. Its eyes are *so* like yours." And she stooped, and fervently kissed the smooth closed lids as she spoke.

"Well, and does its likeness to me make you think of not loving its father?"

"No, no!" said Clarice, as she playfully kissed her husband's hand, "but the thought *did* strike me; and then I thought, of all feelings that must be the most miserable."

She mused silently for a while, and then, rocking herself gently backwards and forwards, she commenced a sort of broken chant, evidently still allowing her restless fancy to feed on the thought to which she had given utterance.

It was a beauteous lady, richly dress'd;
  Around her neck are chains of jewels rare,
A velvet mantle shrouds her snowy breast,
  And a young child is softly slumbering there.
In her own arms beneath that glowing sun,
  She bears him onward to the greenwood tree;
Is the dun heath, thou fair and thoughtless one,
  The place where an earl's son should cradled be?
    Lullaby!

Though a proud earl be father to my child,
  Yet on the sward my blessed babe shall lie;
Let the winds lull him with their murmurs wild,
  And toss the green boughs upward to the sky:
Well knows that earl how long my spirit pined;
  I loved a forester, glad, bold, and free,
And had I wedded as my heart inclined,
  My child were cradled 'neath the greenwood tree.
    Lullaby!

Slumber thou still, my innocent—mine own,
  While I call back the dreams of other days;
In the deep forest I feel less alone,
  Than when those palace-splendours mock my gaze.
Fear not! my arm shall bare thee safely back;
  I need no squire, no page with bended knee,
To bear my baby through the wild wood track,
  Where Allan Percy used to roam with me.
    Lullaby!

Here I can sit, and while the fresh wind blows,
  Waving the ringlets of thy shining hair,
Giving thy cheek a deeper tinge of rose,
  I can dream dreams that comfort my despair;

I can make visions of a different home,
  Such as we hoped in other days might be;
There no proud earl's unwelcome footsteps come,
  There, Allan Percy, I am safe with thee!
    Lullaby!

Thou art mine own—I'll bear thee where I list,
  Far from the dull proud tower and donjon keep;
From my long hair the pearl-chains I'll untwist,
  And with a peasant's heart, sit down and weep!
Thy glittering broider'd robe, my precious one,
  Changed for a simpler covering shall be;
And I will dream thee Allan Percy's son,
  And think poor Allan guards thy sleep with me.
    Lullaby!

Such were the fanciful strains in which Lady Clarice indulged, and often she would sing and murmur these ballads for hours together, heeding not the presence or absence of Mary or her husband, but evidently finding intense pleasure in the ideal world she was hourly creating. Meanwhile her gradual restoration to health, by destroying Lionel's anxiety about her, made him much less willing to yield to her caprice. Again Clarice was puzzled at the change in her husband's demeanour, and after visiting separately with her wrath the usual Moreton men, who gladly spared a fortnight from other amusements to congratulate Lionel, and fall in love with his wife; after abusing Sopsy, Jack Conolly, and the Lark, with the most angry vehemence, she at last quarrelled with Mary. She was sure Mary did mischief; she might not mean it, but she certainly did; and Lionel, when displeased with his wife, could always seek the society of his sister; so that, involuntarily, Mary was made obnoxious to Lady Clarice, who had no female acquaintances at Moreton on whom she could fix her superabundant jealousy.

Nor was it only to Lady Clarice that Mary gave umbrage. To Lionel himself—Lionel, for whose sake she had made the greatest sacrifice woman's heart can make—she seemed occasionally a trouble-

some inmate, a resource for his angry and girlish wife when she wished to pout and be sullen after one of her storms of passion; a barrier between them when they had quarrelled. And, indeed, the person who has the misfortune to be the mutual confidant and mutual friend of a married couple, is generally in the end a burden to both, and does in real fact, however unintentionally, prolong disputes, and rather increase than diminish the inclination to quarrel. Many a time, when Lionel was cross and bitter, Clarice thought, "Well, Mary cannot defend him *now*—Mary will comfort me; I shall go and sit in the nursery with my baby and Mary:" and on his part, Lionel would mutter, "Let her pout; she will have time to reason herself back into good-humour, for I shall go and make Mary read to me in the library." Then the appeals made by both parties:—"*Is* this just, Mary? do not even *you* allow this to be capricious and tyrannical?" from the wife;—and "Come, Mary, you are a woman, and therefore I appeal to you, whether it is proper that Clarice should do so and so?" from the husband;—forcing a decision which *must* offend one of the parties, and which, of course, made the one sided with doubly vehement and obstinate. Perhaps, had they been left entirely to themselves, Clarice, who was both impatient and affectionate, would never have been able to spend a whole evening without speaking to her husband; or Lionel, who particularly required to be amused, would for his own sake have coaxed his only companion into good-humour. At all events, they *thought* they should agree better if they were obliged to depend entirely and solely on each other's society, and the belief was enough to make Mary's presence in her brother's house at times rather irksome than otherwise.

CHAPTER VI.

"We parted—with wild bursting sobs,
And murmured doubts, and racking fears;
We met—and not a word was said,—
That sorrow was too great for tears!"
Ballad of the Bride.

THE much-dreaded moment, when the Claverings announced their return to town, and the opening of the session rendered it necessary for Lionel to recommence his parliamentary exertions, at length arrived. Mary did make a faint effort to remain at Moreton, and urged that she would be of more use there than in London, and preferred the quiet of the country. Lionel's answer was characteristic.

"My dear sister, I don't doubt you like Moreton best; but what am I to do with Clarice? She is much too young and too giddy to do without a companion older than herself. I shall be too much occupied to watch her, and she will get into all sorts of odd scrapes if she goes about alone. I shall have her dancing till four in the morning, and flirting with half the fools in London, out of pure idleness."

"But Lady Clarice has a sister, Leo, whose habits of life are very quiet—whose health would not bear such exertions; and with *her*—"

"Nonsense!" said Lionel, his brow darkening, and his eye flashing; "I married Clarice—not her family. Occasional visits from her sister, of course, I shall expect; but if she thinks that, after her father's conduct towards *me*, I shall either consider myself at home in his house, or allow her to spend all her time there,

she is mistaken. Still less shall I permit *my* house to be a place where Lord Clavering may walk in and out like a tame dog. Lady Clarice is mine now; and it is my pleasure that she should go about with *my* father's daughter, and not Lord Altonby's—*my* sister, and not *hers*."

The fact was, Lionel had never felt thoroughly convinced that the hated Clavering had not endeavoured to engage Clarice's affections; and for this very reason he perhaps thought less of the sacrifice Mary had made in breaking off with him. After the first two or three days of joyous meeting, therefore, between the two sisters, it was a constant subject of dispute, how much or how little Lady Clarice Dupré was to be permitted to see of her own family; and her wrath was unbounded at the idea of any restriction on the intercourse between herself and her "own poor darling affectionate Lisa."

She sometimes reasoned with Lionel, but was oftener outrageous; and from these phrensies of passion Lionel turned with a cold sneer (unless, as was very rare, he was roused to equal vehemence), and Mary with a pained and sickened heart.

During all this time, Miss Dupré and Lord Clavering never met. He never offended Lionel by walking like a tame dog in and out of his house; and the evenings which he spent in the House of Lords, and which Clarice would willingly have passed with her more quiet sister, were, by Lionel's continual worrying prohibitions, oftener devoted to the very employment he had deprecated, viz. dancing, if not till four in the morning, at least till long after Mary was completely wearied out. If Lionel endeavoured to prevent this, by alleging that *he* could not go to the ball that night, and that so young a wife should not be seen without her husband and natural protector, she baffled him by saying, "Then I shall make my father go; I can go with my own father. It is very hard indeed if I may not dance *now*, when you know I

never came out before I was married. You don't mean me to turn into an old woman at once? You are not half so strict in reality as Clavering, and yet you are less indulgent."

This last style of argument was one which Lady Clarice used too often. She did it innocently, and did not perceive the effect on her husband's mind; for in deciding (as she imagined) between her two suitors, and marrying Lionel, she thought she had lulled every sentiment of jealousy, and sufficiently proved her affection for him. And now, worried as she was by unexpected opposition, she was continually asserting that Clavering would not do this, and Clavering would not object to that, till Lionel's hate increased, and he was roused to passions which terrified even his bride.

Clarice also got into another habit, which would have equally provoked Lionel had he known it. She coquetted amazingly with her partners at the ball, and her morning visiters. She really loved and admired Lionel more than any human being, but the intense vanity of her mind restlessly sought to prove how charming she was in the eyes of others; and on the evenings when Lionel had offended her, she lent a more apparently attentive ear, and smiled more graciously on the whispering of coxcombs; not that she really thought them her husband's superiors, or even his equals, but because her mortified spirit could say, "Ah! *he* may think little of me, and scold me, but to every one else I am perfection." And she danced merrily, and gazed brightly and boldly into the eyes of her admirers, though, perhaps, at that very moment she would have given worlds to be at home, her head leaning on Lionel's shoulder, forgiving and forgiven.

Sopsy, or, as he was more correctly called in the London world, Captain Altamont Percy, was the most sedulous of her adorers: it was *the* great passion of his life; and he who was rather overlooked among

his Melton companions as "a good fellow, but a monstrous bore," was a very bright star in a ball-room,—the best waltzer and mazurka dancer, the handsomest man, and the most agreeable singer in the world.

Every species of merit must have its peculiar atmosphere, or it becomes neutralized. A pretty woman on board a steam-packet, in very rough weather, when every one is below sea-sick; a great mathematician at a Twickenham boat-race; a Scotch gentleman who "wears the kilt uncommonly well" in a London drawing-room; a capital fencer and swordsman at a rural sheep-shearing;—all are so misplaced for the time that their value is not perceived or acknowledged: but change their positions, and, lo! the beauty who was left to the care of the weather-beaten steward and busy stewardess of the "James Watt," surrounded by slaves and worshippers; the mathematician, an oracle before whom other men keep silence; the active Highlander, the glory of the "Perth hunt" (alias Perth ball); the skilful swordsman, the terror of some obstinate duellist, and hero in some "affair of honour" which fills the papers for a month.

And thus it was with Sopsy. Among rational and talking beings he was a cipher; among the active and high-spirited of his "set" at Melton he was a good-humoured bore; among chaperons and mothers he was a dangerous detrimental; and among their daughters, and the gayer portion of London wives, he was (give me a name for the species, dear Venus!) the sort of man for whom all the women try—about whom they all quarrel and are jealous among themselves, and who nevertheless *can* do the unmarried ones no good, and will probably do the reputation of the married ones a great deal of harm. They are as regular and distinct a race as if Noah had preserved a pair of human beings on purpose to continue it. They are all handsome, or nearly so; all penniless,

or nearly so; all accomplished, or nearly so; and are remarkable for the neatness of their *chaussure*, and the care with which they trim their whiskers. They wear well-chosen and tasteful waistcoats, belong to Crockford's, are very idle, invent improvements in cabs, and eat small portions of excellent dinners with eagerness and satisfaction. They are mostly good-natured, and in some of them the heart is apparent and visible.

To the latter division belonged Sopsy: he *had* a heart, and a kind one, though it beat under a velvet waistcoat; he was, without exception, the best tempered man in the three kingdoms; though foolish, he had never been in a scrape; though poor, he contrived, not only to keep out of debt, but to make an allowance to his mother; and though a thorough man of the London world, he was yet a good deal shocked, puzzled, and distressed, when he found himself desperately and irremediably in love with the lovely wife of his best friend, Lionel Dupré, Esq., of Moreton Park.

Clarice could not be said to encourage him as a *lover*, for she granted him only the portion of smiles and *coquetteries* accorded to a hundred others; but she felt a secret satisfaction in seeing the man about whom all the women were occupied, entirely occupied with *her;* and the warnings of Jack Conolly (who took upon himself the office of Mentor to his friend's inexperienced wife)—the simply expressed surprise of the unworldly Mary, as to "what she could see to like in him"— and, above all, the endeavours of a certain showy widow, who had contrived to become Lady Alfred Arlington, to appropriate the said Captain Percy to herself, caused Lady Clarice to take more pains to rivet the chains of her prisoner than she was conscious herself.

Lady Clavering regretted the loss of her sister's society, but never dreamed of Lionel's motives for coming so little to Lord Altonby's, and for never

coming at all to her own home. She thought Lionel a very anxious and busy politician, a little wounded and angry at her father's dislike to receive him as a son-in-law; and she thought Clarice gay, almost too gay, in her pursuit of the world's pleasures.

One morning she wrote a note to her sister, containing two orders for the gallery of the House of Lords, and the following lines:—

"I send you Clavering's order, and my father's, my own dear little sister, that you may (if you and Miss Dupré like it) hear the debate to-day in the House of Lords. Do go, dear Clarice, if it does not fatigue you; I think it would please my father to see you take an interest in something besides balls and opera-boxes; and I am sure you, who are so clear-headed and clever, will derive both amusement and information from a couple of hours spent in this way. In fact, it is in consequence of an expressed wish of my father's that I proposed your going, and he will take you in if you like it. You need not dress at all —just go in your bonnet and shawl; and if you go early, you will find a tolerably comfortable seat. I am taking care of myself just now, so do not like to brave the heat, but Miss Dupré can make use of Clavering's order.

"Ever your affectionate

"Lisa C.

"P.S.—I rather think Clavering will speak."

"To be sure I will go," said Lady Clarice, aloud. "Why, it is a new pleasure; why does my father imagine I like balls and operas better than any thing else? I am sure I would much rather hear Clavering speak than go to a birthday at St. James's. Mary, for once here is something to tempt you, which is not always the case with the pleasures your selfish sister-in-law proposes." And with a coaxing smile she presented the order.

A faint flush passed over Mary's cheek as she took it. It was so long since she had seen Clavering's handwriting—so long! and now the few formal words in his hand were read, and re-read, with an abstraction which did not escape Lady Clarice.

"What are you dreaming about?" said she; "you need not bestow such a very attentive perusal on the paper; there is nothing but 'Admit the bearer to the gallery of the House of Lords' written on it, is there?"

"Nothing else," said Mary, and in her tone there was the sound of despair.

Clarice laid down her hat with its blue *pleureuse*, and fixing her eyes on her companion, she said, "Do you know Lord Clavering?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever call upon you?"

"He visited my grandaunt, who was a relation of his."

"While you were there?—well, it's very odd: I never heard him mention you; and he does not seem fond of Lionel: it's *very* odd," continued she, musing. "I'll ask Lisa whether he ever talks about you both to her."

"I entreat, Lady Clarice," said Mary, starting, but she checked herself with a stifled sigh.

Lady Clarice Dupré coloured, and a vague curiosity sprung up in her heart, to know whether there was any other reason for her husband's dislike of her brother-in-law besides the old jealousy on *her* account. "Perhaps he paid attention to Mary, and jilted her," thought the young wife; "and yet he was not a flirt. It certainly is all very odd, Lionel's excessive dislike, and his never coming here to see us, and his never having mentioned that he knew Mary; and the way she spoke when she held that slip of paper. Poor Mary! I hope she is not unhappy; she is very grave sometimes, but people *are* grave when they get to be her age; indeed she is very sweet-

tempered for one who really is almost an old maid." And the beautiful *married* Lady Clarice looked at herself in the glass, as she adjusted her blue plume, and admired the brightness of the face on which twenty summers had scarcely shone; and still glancing in the mirror over her shoulder, she beheld the pale and faded countenance of her sister-in-law gazing again at the order for the House of Lords. "It *is* very odd," said Lady Clarice to herself, and they drove to Lord Altonby's, who had promised to take them in.

Sopsy, alias Captain Altamont Percy, and Bedlam Jack, alias Mr. Conolly, had probably seen the carriage stop at the well-known door, for they both "dropped in" soon after the arrival of the two ladies, and remained chatting and laughing over a late luncheon; till Lord Altonby said, "My love, if you intend to hear the debate, you had better come *now*."

In consequence of this agreeable delay, Lady Clarice and her companion were later than was at all desirable when proceeding to the gallery of the old House of Lords, devoted to the exclusive accommodation of ladies; for the fair individuals who occupied it made up for the habitual apathy of *bon ton*, by showing, in their determination to take and to keep their places—in their resolve to listen to the side they approved of, and indignantly to whisper and exclaim during the speeches they did *not* approve—that they *could* be eager about something.

> "It isn't often that they do these things,
> But when they *do*, they do 'em handsomely:"

and when Mary entered with Lady Clarice, a murmur and an angry stare; a shrugging of the shoulders of some, and a suffocated pant from others; a glance at the choked-up door and occupied seats, all said, as plain as gestures could speak,—

"What upon earth do you mean by coming among

us *now?* don't you see we are fidgety and uncomfortable already; that the gallery is too full, and the day too hot? You are intruders, and if we could, we would turn you out instead of letting you in."

Clarice complained immediately to her father of the crowd and pressure, and returned their angry scrutiny with a displeased knitting of her beautiful eyebrows, and a determined step forwards. Mary saw nothing, observed nothing; she was still regretting the slip of paper with Clavering's signature, which she had relinquished at the entrance of the gallery!

Lord Altonby peeped into the ladies' gallery with a puzzled and vexed face, to see whether there really was space for the two additional listeners he had brought. A tall and highly rouged lady, who knew Lord Altonby very well, and indulged a hope that after the session was over, and his mind more at rest, he would find leisure to make her the second Lady Altonby, turned her head; and seeing who it was, immediately changed the somewhat haughty and resolute expression of her countenance to a bland and gracious smile.

"I fear there is very little room," whispered the marquis.

"Very little indeed," answered the lady.

"Hush!" said two female politicians on the second bench, angrily turning to the speakers.

Not vouchsafing the smallest notice of this interruption, the tall lady added, "Who is with you?"

"Lady Clarice Duprê, my youngest daughter."

"Dear me, could you doubt for a moment that *I* would make room for *your* daughter?" and a sort of fierce and haggard tenderness brightened the eye of the would-be marchioness, as, beckoning and pushing, she at length contrived to seat the Lady Clarice by her side.

The marquis retreated with a thankful murmur, and Mary remained standing; the fatigue of which

position was compensated in some measure by a good view of the house. The tall lady braved the wrath of the whole party in the gallery, in order to make her "darling Lady Clarice" aware who the speakers were, and to which previous speaker they occasionally alluded.

Mary profited by this information, though it was not addressed to her, and became much interested in the debate: but they had hardly sat there half an hour before one of those violent summer storms of thunder and lightning came on; which, as it flashed through the skylight, immediately near them, and deafened them with its growling rolling sound, made it much more difficult to hear what was going on.

"Are *you* afraid of thunder and lightning?" said the tall lady, eagerly, to Clarice.

"Afraid!" said the little heroine, with a proud smile; "no, I am not easily frightened; but why?"

"Because those people in the second row *are*. It is old Lady Simpeing and her daughters; you will see they'll go away, and then we will go down and take their places."

This ingenious plan was put into execution. Lady Simpeing, after smelling her salts once or twice, rose and whispered her daughters to follow her, and her place was instantly occupied.

"Come down here, Mary," said Clarice, as she seated herself. But Mary heard her not. She required no information from the tall lady as to the name of the speaker who had just risen; one hurried agitated glance gave her the noble brow and distinguished figure of William Clavering, prepared to exert his power of persuading and convincing, not over *her* weak heart or inferior understanding, but on the minds of men—his equals, nay, perhaps some his superiors in actual talent; many of whom were envious and angry foes; many cold and doubting listeners; and *all* capable of rebutting and answering (with dif-

ferent degrees of eloquence) the arguments he might bring forward. The mournful heart which had so long been hushed, throbbed with painful excitement; the first few sentences sounded in her ear like the indistinct murmur of a waterfall. Then the chilled blood flowed back to its source, her cheek seemed more than usually pale, and her eye riveted as if by some strange fascination on the eager frankness of Clavering's countenance. She saw him in his hour of glory; she saw him, and forgot for a while that it was no longer an *allowed* interest in her heart; that when that long fatiguing evening was over, he would be welcomed by *another* to the rest and peace of his home, while *she* crept from the presence of the lively Clarice and impatient Lionel to the solitude of her own room, there to *un*-dream all the wild and fevered creations of that hour of excitement, and to struggle against that long-cherished and deeply-rooted affection as a folly and a sin.

All—she forgot it all! The lightning flashed, and the loud thunder rolled and died away above her head, and ever between the pauses of the storm she caught the full and even tones of that majestic voice, whose energetic melody had been lost to her for three long years. She stood absorbed—entranced. It was thus she had often imagined him, while sitting with old Mrs. Bolton, in Spring Gardens, enjoying the quiet and happy consciousness that the evenings not occupied in the turbulent struggles of public life were devoted exclusively to *her*. It was thus she had seen him in the faint but faithful portraiture of her midnight dreams, when they were yet vowed to each other. That peaceful time was passed away—that vow broken by her own sentence—but she remembered it not: it seemed to her that there he stood, *her* Clavering, fulfilling the arduous duties of a public career, and thinking, while he fulfilled them, of the happy Mary Dupré, to whose home the morrow's leisure

was certain to bring him. Alas! where was the morrow which should reunite those two divided hearts?

It required the light touch of Lady Clarice's fairy fingers to rouse Mary from her abstraction.

"They are going to *divide* now," said she, "and we had better go home."

Mary obeyed mechanically, and before the carriage could draw up, Lord Altonby joined them.

"Have you been amused?" said he; "we had some very good speaking to-night."

"Oh, we liked it of all things, papa; and as to Mary, you never saw such a listener, especially while Clavering was speaking;" and she smiled significantly.

"Ah! Miss Dupré understands these matters," said the marquis, with a sigh and a bow,—the bow for his own compliment, and the sigh for his own disappointments; and, for a moment, a thought highly injurious to the interests of the tall lady—the thought that Mary would make an excellent wife to a political man—flashed through his mind. "And not too young or too flighty," thought he: "fine composed creature; sees through people in a moment; cool head; sound judgment; popular manners; every thing one could wish. But I'm too busy to think of it just now; if that d—d question was but settled, one might turn one's mind to other things."

"Marquis of Altonby stops the way!" uttered in every gradation of base and treble shouts, interrupted these matrimonial reflections, and the anxious politician handed his daughter and her companion into the carriage.

Just as they were driving off, a gentleman came to the door, looked up at the sky with a scrutinizing glance, and stood hesitating, apparently unable to decide whether the clouds did not portend another storm, as heavy as the one which had just passed away. Clarice's quick eye caught a glimpse of his

face in the doubtful light, and her hand was instantly on the check-string.

"*We* will take him home," said she, eagerly; "it's Clavering:" then putting her head out of the carriage-window, she called to him, "Would you like a *lift*, great orator?"

"Why, yes; it was quite fine when I came down here, so I gave no orders about getting away; though I cannot help thinking Louisa must have sent the carriage after this storm;" and he looked down the confused line of vehicles which crowded the space by the two houses.

"Oh, never mind," said his inviter, gayly, her pretty chin resting on the window's edge, and her coaxing eyes lifted to his face—"never mind the carriage,

'Let it alone, and it will come home,'

like Bo-peep's flock, in perfect safety. Come with us; you are late, Lisa will be gone to bed, and I, on the contrary, will drink to your success in a cup of hot tea in Grosvenor Place, where we are going for a little while; for the House of Commons is not up, and Lionel won't be home these two hours."

"Well, I yield," said Clavering, good-humouredly; "tea is a great temptation after such a thirsty toil as speaking."

"Ah! and how well you spoke!" said Clarice, as the steps were let down.

"You are a dutiful little sister-in-law, and show great discrimination," replied the object of her compliment as he seated himself by Lord Altonby; "and I only wish—"

What he wished was not explained; for at that moment Clavering became aware of the presence of Mary Dupré, and a sudden and blank pause was the consequence of his discovery.

"I beg your pardon," said he, in an earnest agitated

voice; "I beg you ten thousand pardons, Miss Dupré; I was not aware—"

"Well, never mind," said Clarice, laughing, "you are not expected to see in the dark; your eyes are not the right colour; and, as it is, you have shown wonderful lynx-like qualities. I don't believe one man in five could tell who was in the carriage at this hour; so Mary ought to feel rather flattered, instead of requiring an apology."

"I require none, I assure you," said Mary, in a sweet and, what she meant to be, a *steady* tone; "I am very happy to see Lord Clavering, and glad that he remembers me."

It was a desperate effort to be calm; to prove to her sister-in-law that they had only been slight acquaintances: but Clarice was too quick, too full of passion herself, to be deceived; and Clavering was not sufficiently master of himself at the moment to aid her design. When he *did* speak, the tone of his voice resembled that of Mary's at the time she first received the order for the House of Lords; and, like her, the deep sadness of the tone contrasted strangely with the commonplace question,—

"Were you ever in the ventilator?"

"Never."

"You should go there; you would hear your brother. I wonder, Clarice, you have never been to listen to your husband."

"Don't you know," said she, playfully, "that, in spite of my being papa's daughter, this is my first day of politics? Indeed, I may confess (now he is so fast asleep) that they never could make me care about that sort of thing. It worries me so not to understand it *all at once;* but if all debates were like to-night's, I should soon grow to like them."

"There is not such a comfortable place for ladies to occupy in the House of Commons—is there, Lord Clavering?" said Mary.

This second attempt succeeded better than the

first; only a slight faltering over the words "*Lord Clavering*" being apparent.

"No. I do not know how Clarice would like to sit in a sort of pillory, with her head through a small square hole, in a very large cold apartment with stone walls, and *then* only able to see a few members at a time."

"Oh, I would sit anywhere, and bear any inconvenience, to hear Lionel: I will ask him to-morrow. Does he speak as well as you?"

"Many people think he speaks much better," said her brother-in-law with a smile; and they relapsed into silence.

And during that silence, how strange, how dream-like seemed their meeting! Mary gazed on his face as the uncertain glare of the lamps in some passing carriage suddenly lit his features, and fancied she could trace even the slight shadows of a three years' change, so indelibly was his image stamped on her memory. Sadly, very sadly, she gazed; his face was turned from her, as well as from Lady Clarice, opposite to whom he was seated; and he seemed intently to admire the iron rails of the areas of the different houses. What a mockery of intimacy was this short half-hour they were to spend together—half in light and half in shade, in the same carriage, rolling towards the same home—and the only link between their fates the laughing Lady Clarice Lyle, who stood in the same degree of relationship to *both* those separated lovers!

Oh! how little Mary thought, the day preceding Mrs. Bolton's death, when she carelessly and confidently asked William Clavering whether the beauty of Lord Altonby's youngest daughter was as great as was reported, that the day should come when Lady Clarice would have a claim on his society which *she* had not; when Lady Clarice should be to him a near and dear connection, and Mary Dupré a stranger!

As they turned into Grosvenor Place, Clavering's

eye caught Mary's fixed gaze: there are moments when silence is more irksome and embarrassing than words: he spoke again, at random.

"You made acquaintance with Fred. Atkins at Nice—did you like him?"

"Yes," said Mary, faintly, as the whole scene of agitation and confession returned to her mind.

"He wrote to me soon after you arrived there, mentioning that he had been introduced to you; he was not then aware that I also knew you. I used to be very fond of him; his is a fine and noble nature, and the world has been unable to spoil it."

Again there was silence; but this time it was of short duration, for the carriage rolled rapidly to the door of Lord Altonby's, and stopped.

"I think," said Lord Clavering, "I must leave you here, and return home."

"Oh! you promised," exclaimed his sister-in-law.

"Yes; but I had not recollected—that is—in short, I have letters to write which I must finish to-night."

"You can have tea in five minutes," said Lady Clarice, who hated to be contradicted and baffled in any point, however small.

"No, thank you."

The door was opened, the steps let down, and Clavering awoke his sleeping father-in-law, and assisted his two companions to descend. As Mary's hand tremblingly touched his sleeve, her head swam and her heart ached; it seemed to her, at that moment, that any thing was more endurable than to be *nothing* to him. She, who had so steadily bid him farewell while yet it was in his power to make her his wife, could have flung herself into his arms now that he was lost to her for ever, and have besought him not to forsake her—to allow her to wander over the world with him, were it but as his servant—were it but as the servant of her he loved!

The mercy of God, which hides from us the future, hides also from our fellow-creatures those wilder

moments of passionate temptation, which come to our frail and sinful hearts, and lure us to our ruin; and Clavering dreamed not of the feeling that passed through Mary's mind, while she stood on the steps of the house from which he had led his bride a few months since. Only as he bid her good-night, his voice faltered over the *habitual* "God bless you," which had ever accompanied their farewells; and Mary, as she echoed the words, did so in the tone of solemn and fervent prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

"I'd rather know the grave-worms on thy lips
Than that bad woman's kisses!"

Fasio.

MARY DUPRE was not destined again to be tempted by the presence of Louisa Lyle's husband. Events followed each other with startling rapidity; and she who, at the close of a three years' separation, only saw the lover of her youth the evening they returned together to Grosvenor Place, never again beheld him till time had mocked her memory with the change of every feature.

Lady Clarice's season of gayety, while it at length wearied even *her* vain and restless heart, produced one effect she had not calculated upon; Lionel, though he trusted implicitly (as many men have done) to his superiority over all others as his best security for his wife's affections, and merely thought it impossible she could like any one as well, was yet sufficiently jealous to be her constant companion whenever his more serious occupations permitted it. As he was not only clever and handsome, but fastidious and cold in his general manner, there were many to whom he was a star and an oracle; and the few whom he *did* appear actually to care about plumed themselves upon it, and thought there must be something peculiarly praiseworthy in their own nature, since a man could grow to care for them who ordinarily cared for nothing but himself.

Among those who "laid this flattering unction to their souls" was the showy widow who had seized

upon and married Lord Alfred Arlington,—a match which his family permitted (nay, encouraged) because the widow had a clear head and an excellent jointure. and Lord Alfred was an extravagant fool, and which the somewhat mature bride had herself eagerly planned, on account of the uncertain reputation she enjoyed in the world of fashion. She was a handsome woman, with an arch restless eye, a very white throat and neck, and an arm which every artist in London had modelled in marble, or cast in plaster of Paris. She was in the habit of talking rather freely, and *making eyes* at her male acquaintances, and would perhaps have been reckoned vulgar in manner but for the exceeding sweetness of her voice and laugh, and the moderation of *tone* in which her "good things" were said.

This lady no sooner became acquainted with Lionel than she fell desperately in love with him; an attachment which was received rather coldly at first by its object, but afterward appeared to the jealous eyes of Lady Clarice daily to gain ground. Her irritability was in consequence greatly increased; and as Lionel did not choose to explain to her that he had lent large sums of money to Lord Alfred, and wished to keep well with the woman who governed both his purse and his person, she set down every smile, or civil word, to an inconstant fancy for this "horrid woman" (a term applied by all jealous ladies to the fair destroyers of their happiness), and omitted no opportunity of insulting or mortifying Lady Alfred. The latter, however, stood her ground. Too practised to be thrown off her guard, too well pleased to be put out of temper, too skilful to allow one of her own sex to baffle her—she remained, after a few cleverly-planned attempts to conciliate Lady Clarice, in a sort of civil neutrality, as far as regarded the lady, and ever ready to amuse the gentleman with spirits as merry and mounting as the lark. She was one of those apparently "giddy creatures" who, in

spite of all their giddiness, pursue their own plans with unremitting assiduity and success; who are ever laughing and talking, but never once lose sight of their point. And conscious of her own abilities, she never doubted but that Lionel would at length become attracted by her fascinations, and detached from his wife; took a tender farewell of him in her own green-house; engaged him on some frivolous pretext to write to her; and departed with her husband (having first offered a place in her barouche to Captain Percy) to overlook their proceedings at Melton, and decide how far these imprudent and expensive pursuits suited her income or her tastes.

It was the day after the departure of her fancied rival, that Clarice wound up a long scene of worrying and reproach by one of the most fearful bursts of passion Mary had yet witnessed. Speechless with rage, she at length snapped the chain round her slim throat to which Lionel's picture was suspended, and, dashing it to the ground, stamped on it with the fury of a child. She was proceeding to unclasp the bracelets which had been his gift, when Lionel, advancing, firmly held her hands.

"If you put yourself into those passions," said he, bitterly, "I will have you shut up as a mad woman."

At these words Clarice's heart was stung; she paused a moment, burst into a fit of shrieking and sobbing, disengaged her hands, and exclaimed, "My father! my father! it is a curse upon me for leaving my father; but I will go back; I will not remain to be insulted by wicked women, or frightened into submission by your unmanly violence; I will be divorced from you, and I will live with Lisa and Clavering—kind, gentle, noble Clavering! *he* would not have treated me this way, if I had been wise enough to stand by my father's choice and marry *him*—I wish I had—I wish to God I had!" said she, passionately clasping her hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven.

Lionel's brow lowered like a thunder-cloud as he stepped nearer his wife, and Mary flung herself between them.

"Oh! Lionel," said she, "have patience with her! Tell her she is mistaken about Lady Alfred; and you, Clarice, retract those foolish, those wicked words, and be friends again."

But her appeal only increased the fury of the incensed Clarice.

"It is because *you* are here," said she, "that we never *are* friends; Lionel can treat me as he pleases, and then you can both amuse yourselves all the evening talking over my faults. There is always some one to meddle and encourage him; sisters-in-law and old maids always do mischief, and my life is made miserable by you. And as to *wicked* words, I have only spoken the truth; and if you spoke your wishes with the same sincerity, *you* would wish yourself with Clavering too; you can't hear his name without colouring, and he daren't come near me because you are here. It is *you* who have made Lionel hate him, and disunited our whole family: I don't choose you to stay here; I won't bear it—"

"Silence!" said Lionel, in a tone of thunder.

But when the stormy scene had been followed, as usual, by a passionate reconciliation; when those two wayward and selfish hearts had once more vowed to be all in all to each other; when Clarice's winding arms stole round Lionel's neck, and her soft curls touched his cheek, as she murmured, "I am sure if I did not fancy Mary always made things worse, I should never be so passionate"—no word checked her—no remonstrance was urged.

Mary left the house of that brother for whose sake she had relinquished so much, and went to board with a lady who had female pupils and lodgers, at Hastings.

It is true that Lady Clarice repented both her speech to Mary and the effect of it; and she wrote

to say so, after a few weeks had shown her how little the banishment of her gentle and kind-hearted sister-in-law added to her domestic comfort. They had gone down to Moreton, and Lionel was about to gather round him his usual friends, among whom she doubted not "the Lark" and his bride would be included. And her surmise proved correct. Lionel informed her that Lady Alfred would probably spend some days at Moreton Park; and as he spoke, he kissed her crimson and indignant cheek, and said, "I wonder my lovely Clarice can think it possible I should prefer any woman's society to hers."

But *words*, let them be ever so kind and conciliatory, are nothing when opposed to *deeds*. When Lady Alfred *did* come, to ride, and walk, and gather flowers in the conservatory, she certainly engrossed more of Lionel's society than was at all consistent with the coaxing speech of preference we have given above; and Clarice's passionate remonstrances were met with a vehemence of anger which nearly equalled her own.

It was after one of these scenes that Clarice wrote to Mary, and her prayer for the return of her sister-in-law was as imploringly humble as her sentence of banishment had been offensive. "Come back," the letter ran—"come back, my own, my only true friend; only come back to me, and I will kneel at your feet, and ask you to forgive me. I repent my words and my thoughts; they were mad, foolish, and unworthy; I deplore my ingratitude—I entreat of you, as you value my happiness, to come to me before my heart is utterly broken."

Mary wrote the gentlest of denials; she did not say what an effort it had been originally to determine to leave her home; she did not state the impossibility of depending on the irresolute and violent feelings of one who could wound her by such bitter words as those spoken on that eventful evening; she soothed, she advised, she comforted—but she did not return.

Again Lady Clarice wrote:—"When I got your letter, cruel friend, I was sitting in *your* room, which I had had prepared for you, with all the late flowers I could find in the garden; I thought you would come; I thought I should see your kind pale face, and be allowed to weep on your bosom; I sat by the cheerful fire, and felt hopeful and joyous as I used to do. But instead of you, to receive nothing but that letter—oh, Mary! you never can know how it wrung my heart! And even now I cannot believe that you will not come; I cannot believe that you will leave me to myself; I cannot believe that you will not plead with Lionel against that wily treacherous woman. Every day I shall have your fire lit, and your room arranged as if you were occupying it, and I shall come and sit here and wait for you. You *will* come back, Mary? What can I say or do to prove to you that I am penitent? I can hear them laughing in the conservatory—*my* husband and that wretched woman; and all this while Captain Percy talks to me of my altered spirits, and follows me about the house like a dog; and my baby is ill,—he was in convulsions two days ago, and Lionel walked out with Lady Alfred, while I was sitting shivering with terror and sorrow by his bedside; and instead of pitying me, he said Lady Alfred told him teething fits were very common! *She* speak of my baby to him! Oh! if she ever has children, I hope they will die, or live to be a shame to her! I hope *she* will sit alone by their bed, while her idiotical husband is gambling on the race-course. No, Mary, I don't hope it; I know you will think me wicked; I am going to try and pray. I will go and sit in the nursery (for I seldom go down now, because I hate her so,—I hate her smile, and the way she presses my hand; I feel as if she were mocking me all the time). Pray, PRAY come back to me, Mary; you *can* sooth Lionel,—you can manage him, and *I* am nothing in my own house."

To this letter was appended a hurried P.S.

"Lionel has just come to me with a London physician for my boy, and the physician is to stay in the house till Charles has got through his teething. I thought (whatever change may be in his heart for *me*) he *must* still love his child; and he sat a long time with me, and told me he had sent to town that very day when I thought him so cruel and so careless for some clever and skilful man to be with me, and see baby constantly. Now, if *you* will only come back, Mary, I shall feel happy.

"CLARICE."

But Mary, though she wept over the letter, remained at Hastings. She knew Clarice so well now—she knew the buoyant *springiness* of her disposition, the mobility of all feeling, good or bad, and the ease with which, after her passion was over, she resumed her natural vivacity and joyousness—so that her wild and mournful appeal, though it touched her sister-in-law's heart, had no effect on her resolution. And she was right.

The morning on which Lady Clarice wrote that letter was spent in bitter tears; but the evening (after the momentary kindness of Lionel about his son and heir) was one of wild mirth; and the grave physician was astonished to see the young and anxious mother, whose distress on their first interview had so affected him, singing a number of merry Neapolitan songs, and mimicking the style common among the lower orders of the people in that land of music, fair Italy, for the amusement of her husband's Melton friends, and the especial gratification of Captain Altamont Percy.

Mary's existence meanwhile was dull and cheerless. She had taken up her abode with the lady we have mentioned that she might avoid living actually alone; a plan which neither her income nor her age (in spite of Clarice's opinion of her being almost an old maid) appeared to her to justify. She had no-

thing to look forward to, and much wherewith bitterly to feed her memory, and the result was a settled and grave melancholy. Occasionally, too, doubts would steal over her mind whether she had, indeed, done for the best in allowing Lionel to sway *her* destiny, instead of her being able to guide and shape *his;* painful doubts and remorseful thoughts respecting Clavering, the noble and trusting Clavering, wrung her heart; and, as she sat unseen, her head buried in her hands, at the little reading-desk which she had brought from Madeira, the question was ever at her lips, "Have I done well, my father, in the measure of my obedience? have I, indeed, fulfilled your command in the spirit, as well as to the letter, of its injunctions? or is it all a delusion, a temptation of the mocking fiend? I might have married Clavering, and while *I* could have been ever near the wayward and yet most loveable Clarice, Lionel would have received from *him* such guidance and control as respect and regard would have given him power to exert. It is impossible that they should not have become friends at last! Have I done well, my father? or have I, foolishly and miserably for myself and others, perverted your dying intentions?"

But after a while these doubts were repelled. Mary felt conscious that, however mistaken, her efforts had been for the right; that no selfish weakness had mingled with her plans; and that, after God, she had loved the brother committed to her care by her departed father. Her mind recovered its tone; no sorrow, which is unmingled with self-reproach, can weigh heavily for ever, and at all moments; and Mary awaited the future, allotted to her by the all-seeing Disposer of events, with meek and quiet resignation.

Occasionally, in her strolls along the sea-shore, she would request the companionship of one of the little pupils domesticated in the same house with herself; and it was an amusement and an interest to her to watch the growth of those eager minds, and instruct

them, in her own gentle way, in the paths of pleasantness and peace. During one of these walks it was that she again encountered the beautiful Annie Morrison. The eye of the little actress sparkled, her face had recovered its bloom and freshness, and she was looking up at a little child she carried on her shoulder. Mary involuntarily stopped as she drew near; but after one hurried glance, Annie Morrison walked on; ceasing, however, the laugh and song with which she had been addressing her little burden, and setting him gravely on the sands, to walk by her side.

"Isn't that a pretty woman?" said Mary's girlish companion; "that is the wife of the manager of the Hastings theatre; and she is thought so beautiful that many artists have taken her picture, and there are prints of her at all the libraries. She acts beautifully, oh! so beautifully! and sings like a nightingale. We were all taken by our kind governess to see her, last summer."

Mary sighed; she remembered the day when she too had been to the Hastings theatre,—that day which had led to the discovery of Lionel's selfish baseness; and her heart recoiled from the painful memory.

When she returned home she found a note lying on her table in Annie Morrison's handwriting; she broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"I did not like—I did not *dare* to stop and speak to you to-day, because I am too well known here, and the little girl who was walking with you might have repeated to her governess that you knew me; and people would wonder and blame that *you*, the respected and beloved sister of Lionel Dupré, should know *me*, the principal actress of Hastings. But if, any day when you are walking *alone*, you would let me see you, and speak to you for a little while, it would be a very, *very* great pleasure to me. I think you will not refuse me this. I saw that you stopped to-day, and my heart beat quickly and fondly, though

I passed on. I am grown cautious and steady, and even seeing *you* did not surprise me into showing my feelings.

"I am now married to Mr. M., the gentleman who spoke my apology that miserable night, four or five years ago. I think I have done right; I wanted protection; the profession I have entered requires it. I have nothing to complain of. He is the most gentle, generous, kind-hearted person possible, and well educated—being natural son to a gentleman, who brought him carefully up, but dying suddenly, without a will, left him destitute. He is very fond of me, and when once I can grow to forget the past, I am sure I shall feel perfectly contented.

"P.S.—Is not my boy a pretty creature? Poor little Frank was prettier still, but *this* is very dear to me.

"Yours, gratefully and respectfully,

"ANNIE M."

Mary *did* see and speak to the little actress, and admired the delicacy of feeling which had prompted her to walk so gravely on, rather than compromise her friend. She saw her but once, for a London engagement having been offered to Mr. M., for himself and wife, he gladly accepted it: and this interview was the only occurrence which broke the monotony of her present existence.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Thou hast betrayed me! *Thou*, in whom I trusted—
To whom my heart lay open, as a flower
Which woos the sun to gaze upon its face—
Thou, who didst make my love for other things
Seem weak, and poor, and childish!—Still I seek
For some reproach to sting thee to the core;—
But in my wonder at thy treachery,
Find only that word—THOU!"

THE storm and the lull followed each other in alternate succession at Moreton, till at length one grievous and vexatious circumstance united the sympathies of all parties. A dissolution of parliament took place; and Lionel, after a contest, in which he spent an immense deal of money, lost the election for A. Lady Clarice, partly from bitterness of feeling at home, and partly from natural carelessness, had as utterly forgotten the electors of A. as if no such people existed. The Truemans, the Hemings, the Prudhoes, accustomed to the steady and persevering kindness and attention of Mary, and ignorant of the cause of Lady Clarice's neglect, were delighted at having at length obtained an opportunity of mortifying "that proud puss," who never even came into the town, much less gave an opinion as to the growth of the eight little Prudhoes or the beauty of the infant Heming. Every man whose petition to have his son made tide-waiter, or his nephew clerk in the customs, or himself a supernumerary in some crowded department, had been thrown aside, or had received a cold and unconciliating answer, eagerly stood forward against the useless member who had *only* represented them; *their* idea of a man elected

"to *serve* in the present parliament," evidently being, that he should serve every individual voter, and procure a place for every separate supporter, who had helped to procure him *his* place in the House of Commons. Lionel's end answered, and his return ensured at the last election, he cared little how his voters liked him, and his long absence and subsequent neglect had allowed the enemy's faction to gain so much strength that it crushed him at last.

Bigley, the long-forgotten, scorned, and braved Bigley, came up from Norfolk, and worked like the mole—unseen himself, and only known by the effect of his labours; and as Lionel passed from the hustings, tired, pale, and exhausted, as much from disappointment as fatigue, his secret foe walked towards him in a swaggering, bullying manner, and repeating the words Lionel himself had used on the occasion of their quarrel, while a triumphant gleam shot from his small blue eye, he muttered,—

"How do you like the work of a *yellow-wigged Norfolk attorney?*"

Lionel was already suffering under intense irritation, and without a word of answer he lifted his arm, and with one powerful blow felled Mr. Samuel Bigley to the pavement. His head struck against the curb-stone, and was cut open in the most frightful manner.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered he brought an action for damages against Lionel, and in this, whatever he might have been in the former one, he was eminently successful.

Lionel's affairs, indeed, began to look desperate. As long as he was in parliament he was a creditable and accredited man; but after the loss of his election, and the very awkward and disagreeable story of the "infamous and unprovoked assault" on the person of Mr. Samuel Bigley, and more especially after a report had been spread (by this much injured gentleman) that it was the intention of Mr. Dupré to start

for the continent, and reside abroad, now that he had no present motive for a residence in England; his creditors became clamorous, and pressed upon him. The architect who had altered the family mansion at Moreton Park had never been paid, nor had any of the bills incurred at that time. Large sums had been squandered at Melton, at Doncaster; money had been lent to divers needy friends, who were quite as penniless now as when they borrowed it; and, above all, one drunken night Lionel had been persuaded to sign over bonds to Lord Alfred, by which the latter was to come into immediate possession of thirty thousand pounds, and to repay the sum at his leisure. To these difficulties might be added, the minor extravagances in which Lady Clarice indulged, and the sort of "open house" Lionel had kept whenever he was at Moreton. In short, he was nearly ruined. Lady Clarice gave up her diamonds—Moreton Park was to be sold—and Lionel Dupré went up to Jermyn-street, with the firm intention of doing as had been reported, viz. settling abroad, as soon as he should have arranged his affairs in London. For this purpose Jack Conolly was summoned, and by his assistance Moreton was sold for about two-thirds of its original value, and such of the creditors as were most clamorous were partly satisfied. Lord Altonby was requested to make some settlement on his daughter, and a loan was attempted to be negotiated for Lionel till such time as Lord Alfred should repay the sum owing; but this scheme fell to the ground.

After their arrival in town, Lionel's temper became unbearable. He drank deeply (which had formerly been of rare occurrence), and was often absent from home. Lady Clarice loved him still; she *tried* to be patient, but patience was not in her composition; and bitter words were exchanged between them. At length the day of open rupture came,—as lovely a summer's day as ever shone,—Lady Clarice had endeavoured to persuade Lionel to drive her in his cab

to Kensington, where some rare and very curious china, lately imported, was exhibited for sale—it was a rarity, an event, and one which made no little sensation among the fair lovers of such trifles in London. Lionel refused, somewhat coldly; he pleaded his wish that she should avoid expensive purchases; and, finally, when the drive at least, without the china, was insisted upon, he impatiently declared he had business in the city which would occupy his whole day, and left her. Lady Clavering was not in town, so that Clarice, whose heart was obstinately bent upon this drive to Kensington, felt puzzled as to the choice of a companion; at length she decided upon going alone, and ordered the barouche. When she arrived at the place of her destination, a carriage was already at the gate; the blinds were drawn down to shade the sun, and she recognised the livery as that of the Arlington's. A thrill of dislike passed through her heart as she watched to see the hated Lady Alfred descend from it; but words are inadequate to express the burning jealousy and rage which stung every nerve when she beheld Lionel alight, hand out the lady, and proceed to transact his city business, by aiding her in the selection of various unique pieces of china!

Lady Clarice retained sufficient command of herself to assert that she had changed her mind, and to desire the coachman to return home; but once in the solitude of her own room, the phrensy of her manner resembled madness. She could not rest—she could not weep—a burning sickness was at her heart—and she walked to and fro till the well-known step of her husband ascended the stairs leading to her apartment. Then she paused, and her eyes fixed on the door. Lionel entered—he had two small china jars of expensive workmanship in his hand—his countenance was worn and jaded—but Clarice looked not on him. Before he had time to explain the meaning of his gift, she flew towards him, her eyes sparkling with

fury, and dashed them to fragments on the hearth. Then, with rapid and virulent abuse, she reproached him,—called Lady Alfred the vilest and basest of her sex,—expressed her loathing hatred in the most unqualified terms,—and was proceeding to her usual threat of seeking shelter with her father or sister, when Lionel, who had had *his* share of the disappointment and irritation of the day—who had assured himself of the futility of any expectation of repayment from Lord Alfred—who had learned that he was involved to a degree that threatened him with a prison, owing to the rascality of the Moreton agent—and who was so far innocent of the wish to give her offence that the meeting with Lady Alfred had been purely accidental, suddenly became as pale as death with rage. He strode forward to his wife, gazed for a moment in silence, while a torrent of angry words choked her utterance, and then—

He struck her.

Lady Clarice bent not under the blow, nor started at its infliction. She became suddenly calm; and as Lionel, half in exculpation, exclaimed, "You will madden me into doing what I shall curse myself for," she motioned him to leave the room. He did so; and Clarice walked to her writing-table, wrote a note, folded and sealed it with deliberate care, and, ringing for the servant, desired him to take it immediately.

The man left the room, and for an hour Clarice remained—her head buried in her hands—in fixed and stupid thought. She was roused by the opening of her chamber door.

"If you please, my lady," said the intruder, "Captain Altamont Percy is at Brighton, and they want to know whether the note should be forwarded?"

"No—yes—no; I will tell you by-and-by," said she; and she relapsed into a revery. Suddenly she uncovered her face, gazed wildly round, flew upstairs, and, kneeling by her child's cott, exclaimed,

with passionate tears, "I am not gone—I am not gone—I dreamed myself away from you, Charles; but I am *here*, my own, my blessed boy—I am here still!"

Her sobs and shrieks awoke the infant; and as the nurse lifted him from the bed to lull him to sleep again, she said, "Oh, my lady, my lady! you are very young, and trials come to all; take the advice of an old woman, and do nothing rash; it will all come right by-and-by, please God; and if it doesn't, why, you've done your duty."

Servants always see more of what is going on than people choose to believe; and the nurse had seized in a moment the train of thought which had brought Clarice to the nursery to assure her baby that she *was not gone*. After a while she turned to her young mistress, who had in some measure checked her grief for fear of disturbing the child's rest, and pointing to its sweet quiet face as it lay in her lap, its long lashes shadowing its rose-leaf cheek, she said, with a pitying smile, "And could it come into your heart to leave a lamb like that?"

Clarice stole away after she had kissed his brow, and returned to her own room.

"No!" said she; "I will be patient. Lionel will come and comfort me this evening; he will pray to me to forget that blow, and I *will* forget it. I will forgive all for the sake of that sleeping cherub; and we will leave England and live at Nice—happy Nice! or anywhere, so that that wicked woman cannot follow."

CHAPTER IX.

"Thy voice! it was a pleasant sound,
When wearily I lay
By the blue streamlet, to forget
The hot and irksome day:
But rest, and peace, and love are o'er,—
And I shall hear thy voice no more!"

LADY CLARICE LYLE sat impatiently watching through the long, long twilight of a summer's evening, till the stars came out one by one upon the pale clear sky, and the lines of lighted lamps twinkled through the dark streets. At length she heard her husband's step; and so softened was her heart towards him by the ruminations in which she had been indulging of "happy Nice," that she arose, half-inclined to proffer her ready forgiveness unasked, and weep upon his bosom. But the step passed her apartment, and Lionel went to his own dressing-room. She could hear him walk to and fro for a moment, pause, walk again, again pause, and, finally, the lid of a box was shut down, the lock of the door turned, and he left his dressing-room.

"*Now* he is coming!" said Clarice, and she advanced as if to welcome him; but his step again passed her door, and *as* he passed he whistled part of an Italian barcarole they had often sung together in the early days of their "love's young dream!"

She walked to the bell, rang it, asked the servant whether Mr. Dupré was returned to dinner, received for answer that Mr. Dupré had just gone out, without saying when he should return, and was again left alone.

This, *this* was worse than all! The cold, the cruel neglect, the utter forgetfulness of the suffering being he had left! Clarice unpinned the lace tippet which covered her neck, and glanced at her pained and aching shoulder: the purple mark of the blow was there, which Lionel's violence had inflicted; and her heart, which *had* been so ready to forgive, closed against the man who could so offend and yet not think it worth while to speak a kind word afterward! It was at this moment that a pencilled note was brought from Altamont Percy. It was hardly legible; and merely announced his unexpected return from Brighton, his finding her undated letter, and being then within a few doors in a travelling-carriage, ready to convey her where she would—to India, if such was her determination.

Clarice stole up-stairs; the nurse slept heavily, and she looked once more on her slumbering babe. "*He* will not love you, my boy; he loves nothing on this earth but himself," murmured she, bitterly. She turned to go, lingered pausingly at the door, looked with eyes dimmed by tears towards the white curtains of the little cott, returned, lifted him softly in her arms, wrapped him in a fur mantle, and, unattended and unprepared, walked down-stairs. The drowsy porter opened his eyes, started, and rose. "Where is John?" said his lady; "I want to send him a message."

The porter left the hall to call his fellow-servant, and Clarice opened the door herself. The heavy re-echoing sound it gave in closing smote on her heart; she paused, faint with fear, and tottering under the burden of her boy's weight; suddenly an arm was passed round her, a well-known voice murmured, "Dear, ever dear Clarice!" and in another moment Lady Clarice sank fainting in the carriage by Altamont Percy's side. Her child was lifted from her knee by a strange Abigail, provided by her lover to attend on the lady herself; and, uncon-

scious of all earthly objects, she was whirled from the home which never, in joy or sorrow, could be hers again.

When Lionel left his dressing-room, and passed that of Lady Clarice whistling an Italian barcarole, he was a desperate and a reckless man. He did not, he could not forget the unmanly violence of which he had been guilty; but in that hour all seemed nothing in comparison of a determination he had taken. He armed himself with pistols; wrote a note to his wife, placed it on a conspicuous part of his table, and, walking to the Albany, inquired for Mr. Conolly. He was not at home, but expected in every minute to dress for the opera. Lionel expressed his intention of waiting for him in his rooms, and the servant, knowing the intimate terms they were on, admitted him.

A stone statue could not remain more motionless than did Lionel, till the entrance of his friend. Jack Conolly entered the room in his usual hasty brisk manner, shook him heartily by the hand, and, showing his fine teeth with a frank good-humoured smile, said, "Soh! I'm afraid you come to me for advice. Explain quickly, my good fellow, for I would not miss Brocard's first *pas* for the world. Ah! who is this from?" and he took up a note which lay on the table. While he was reading it, Lionel walked unperceived by Conolly to the door, locked it, put the key in his pocket, and, stepping back to his Melton friend, faced him, with a countenance whose deadly and fixed expression told its own tale to the experienced arranger of other men's affairs. He saw that Lionel was desperate; he guessed he was a ruined man, and, flinging himself into an easy chair, he looked up inquiringly for the desired explanation. That explanation was not given exactly in the manner he expected.

"Conolly," said Lionel, in a hoarse, husky voice, "I am utterly ruined. My boy is a beggar's son."

Conolly nodded, slowly folded his hands, and looked at a heavy seal ring on his finger. Lionel cleared his throat and spoke again, increasing, as he proceeded, in the rapidity and violence of his manner.

"I am ruined; and that ruin I owe to *you*. You first lured me to pleasures for which I was not naturally inclined; from which, perhaps, my very faults, —my coldness, my want of eagerness about trifles, would have saved me. What little of the gambler, the rake, the blackleg, there may be in my composition, I owe to *you*. You introduced me into that set from which, for my folly, I have chosen my friends. You betted for me and with me; won my money yourself, and taught other men how to win it. But it is not to utter reproaches that I am come. You were a witness, a sort of security for the repayment of the money lent to that drunken ass, Alfred Arlington. I want that money; I want it to enable me to leave England immediately. The painted Jezebel he chose to marry has mocked me on this point; she has done more—she has *baffled* me. This morning my patience ebbed; I broke with her. I threatened, she laughed at me. I taunted her with her passion for me, her words, and her smiles, and her twisting attitudes—faugh! the thought of her sickens me. Conolly, I ask you, is this money forthcoming, or is it not? Will you undertake for its repayment within a given number of hours, or will you take your choice of these?" and he suddenly drew the pistols from his pockets.

Conolly did not rise; but he joined his hands, and there was more vexation than contempt in his cool confident smile.

"Dupré," said he, "I thought you knew me better. I really am too old for these follies, and have gone through too many of these scenes to feel afraid of a pair of pistols. Sit down, and be calm. Any thing

I can do for you in reason, any thing you ask of me as a friend—"

"A friend!" said Lionel, bitterly, "it is my friends who have beggared me! You refuse to produce the sum owing?"

"How the devil *can* I produce it?" said Conolly, impatiently.

"You refuse to fight—now—here—as we are?"

"Certainly; I wonder you can be such a fool as to expect it."

"Then on your own head be it!"

As he spoke he fired the pistol; and, but for the lightning-like rapidity of eye and movement with which the practised duellist frustrated his intention, by knocking the pistol upward, Conolly had been a dead man.

He rose and grasped Lionel's arm with an iron hand; then, pointing to the paper of the room blackened and pierced by the bullets, he said, in a low voice—"In these few seconds you might have been a murderer, and I might have laid a bleeding corse at your feet. Would that have bettered your situation?"

"If I am mad, you have driven me to it," said Lionel, doggedly, as he quietly suffered the pistols to be removed.

"And now, my good fellow," said Conolly, as he closed a drawer upon the dreaded instrument of vengeance, "sit down and hear me. I am not going back upon old days now, nor do I intend to combat the absurd notion that you were *lured*, as you call it, into the following of particular pleasures; if you reflected, you would see that it is the selfish determination to procure amusement at all risks, and to do what for the moment appears to afford a chance of interest, that lures men on, rather than any persuasion on the part of their friends. But no more of that. You are ruined, you say? So was I, long before your age; but I have no recollection of offer-

ing to shoot my friends through the head in consequence. Personally, I am unable to assist you; I believe Alfred Arlington to be utterly without money. What may be done with his father, Lord Montarlington, by time and perseverance, I know not; but, at all events, no *immediate* settlement could be made. My advice to you is, that you put your affairs under my management; I will do the best I can to make such arrangements as may enable you to live abroad in tolerable comfort. There are several ways in which this may be managed by a skilful hand. And, meanwhile, I also advise you to surrender and take the benefit of the act. I don't profess to be one of your moralists, or a man of stern principle; but I can serve a friend as zealously as a better man; and," added he, as he wrung Lionel's hand, "I would do a great deal for the remembrance of your sister, though she never thought much of me."

How far the mischievous advice of the experienced Conolly might have been taken, and how far, by baffling his creditors with the skilful arrangements alluded to, Lionel might have been benefited, cannot be known; for the very next day, as he was sitting in sullen despair in his forsaken home, every thing in confusion round him, and awaiting the vain endeavours made to ascertain the direction in which Lady Clarice had pursued her flight, he was seized and conveyed to the King's Bench Prison; which event rendered the efforts of his friends unnecessary. While there, he was entirely deserted. What, indeed, could be expected of his circle of intimates? The kind and good-tempered Sopsy had run away with his wife; the dull and dandling Lark was afraid to look upon his creditor—even had his wife, in the burning wrath of a scorned and forsaken woman, permitted him to show kindness to the companion of his boyhood. Bedlam Jack, indeed, was willing to serve him; but he was gone out of town to arrange and consult with the rascally agent at Moreton,

which place he and the architect were remodelling, and again altering for its new possessor. All the little prison indulgences and small favours, which some conciliating individuals contrived to procure for themselves, were denied to the imperious Lionel. The haughty violence or sneering coldness of his manner, imbittered as it was by consciousness of deadly wrong, made those whose principal enjoyment lies in the exercise of temporary and arbitrary power *glad* to grind him, while it prevented his obtaining the sympathy of his fellow-creatures in misfortune.

In a very short time he became ill. A nurse was hired to attend upon him; and he dragged through the weary and uncheered hours of sickness with sullen submission to his fate. One only being heard by accident, from some gay and gossiping friend, of his misfortunes, and came to see him,—the wronged Annie Morrison. He was asleep when she entered, and when he first opened his eyes on that bright cheerful face, it seemed to him only a dream. She paid a short visit, and sighed over the brief and dogged answers which were all that her kind efforts produced. The next day she brought rare and expensive hot-house flowers and fruit, which she imagined might tempt the invalid. But Lionel's manner was even more ungracious than on the previous afternoon.

"I wish," muttered he, "you would leave me to myself, and cease to decorate my room according to your theatrical ideas of comfort;" and he peevishly pushed away the flowers which stood near him; "these things make me sick," added he, "take them away."

Annie removed them.

"I thought," said she, sorrowfully, "these would please you; and it was a pleasure to me to *earn* them for you; I cannot rear them in *our* garden now; and yet you ought still to love the scent of the datura!"

and she bent over the blossoms to conceal her emotion.

There was a pause. Annie turned wistfully towards him.

"If I bore you," said she—"if it is no pleasure and no comfort to you to see me, you may tell me so. I did not come here to brave or worry you, but because I heard you were alone, and—*forsaken.*"

Her voice faltered over the last word; but she continued in a low gentle tone—"I judged wrongly, foolishly, perhaps. It is such a comfort to *me* not to be alone, when I am ill or grieved! But I would rather know the truth; I thought you would be glad to see one whom you knew long since—one who loved you."

"It is not the love of a *mistress* I want," said Lionel, bitterly; "if, indeed, any one ever did really love me" (and his thoughts reverted to Clarice)—"Oh! Mary! Mary! my own, my gentle sister—where are *your* consoling words in this heavy hour—where are you—where are you!"

"Have you sent to her? Does she know all that has happened? Hastings is such a quiet place that perhaps—have you written?"

"*I* write!" said Lionel. "No! I sent her from me in my hour of sunshine and prosperity, and I do not expect her to come near me now."

"Oh, Lionel—Mr. Dupré—do not speak so;" and the actress's cheek, which had crimsoned at the harsh and ungrateful term applied to her, grew pale, and wet with tears.

"Go—go—you weary me," said Lionel, as he turned his face away.

Annie obeyed; but she wrote by that night's post to Mary, briefly narrating all that had occurred, and stating it as her opinion that Lionel was very ill. In six hours from the time she received the letter, Mary was in town. She had heard vague rumours of Lady

Clarice's elopement, but remembering the passionate attachment evinced even in the midst of her anger, she treated the report with indifference. All besides was a startling shock; and as she figured to herself her young and beloved brother in his bereavement, she clasped her hands and murmured, "Now, at least, no power shall separate us; once more we shall be all in all to each other!"

When she arrived at the place of her destination, she was informed that Mr. Dupré had become worse in the night, and was suffering under a brain fever. Anxiety, regret, and self-reproach had indeed brought on a temporary delirium; and when Mary entered the room which her brother occupied, she found him standing half dressed in the midst of the apartment, glaring wildly around him, an open razor in his hand, and his throat bared for the purpose of self-destruction.

With a sudden shriek, whose agony would have startled a madman into consciousness, Mary sprang into his arms; and as he staggered back to the bedside, she said, "God forgive you, Lionel! God forgive and pity you!" and kneeling down by his side, she prayed, and wept bitterly.

Incoherent ravings on different subjects—appeals to Clarice—curses on Percy's treachery—remorseful self-upbraidings—and allusions to the earlier part of his life, and to the scenes and people of Madeira, wrung Mary's heart; but at length the fever abated in a degree, and he slept.

The careful hand of poor Annie Morrison had arranged every thing in the neatest order, and the flowers she had brought were still fresh in their several vases. On the table (which was cut and marked with initials and caricatures) lay some scattered papers, an empty vial for medicine, a basket of fruit, and the neck-handkerchief which Lionel had taken off at the time he meditated suicide. As Mary folded and put away the papers in his portfolio, her eye fell

upon some stanzas in her brother's handwriting, addressed to herself; she perused them with eager anxiety, and not without tears, as a proof that he had not at least forgot or ceased to regret her.

TO MY SISTER MARY.

Lo! where I pass the heavy hours alone,
  Afraid to call thee, lest thou answer not;
Striving with bowed and broken heart to own
  I earn'd the desolation of my lot!
I sigh for thee—who in the hour of strife
  Didst ever murmur words of peace and truth;
Where art thou, spirit of my wasted life—
  Pale guardian angel of my rebel youth?

Where art thou, Mary? other footsteps come,
  And other ears my feverish whispers catch;
Strangers—who have no memory of my home—
  And hired attendants of the midnight watch.
And one whom in my youth I used to love,
  With ringlets waving round her sunny brow,
And torturing words, my worn out heart to move—
  She too hath haunted me—but where art thou?

I call'd not her—she only brings to mind
  The wild temptation of those vanish'd years,
A selfish heart with pride and passion blind,
  And memory of thy meek and silent tears.
I call on *thee!* my power to love is gone,
  My wearied eye perceives not beauty's grace;
I loath its brightness—yearning for *thy* tone—
  Thy faded smile, and thy familiar face!

Even as some shot, which, sent with erring aim,
  Finds not the mark the skilless shooter meant,
And towards the spot whence first its flashing came,
  Rolls feebly back—its force and passion spent:
So my spent heart, with sick and chill rebound,
  Returns to thee—its hour of fervour o'er;
The aim it sought for in the world, unfound—
  The hope it look'd to—visible no more!

Fain would I lean my head upon thy breast,
  As in the sorrows of my childish days—
Fain would my toiling spirit sink to rest,
  Beneath the tender comfort of thy gaze;

But all in vain! Some careless stranger's hand
Shall lay me in my tomb with words of blame;
They shall forget me in my native land,—
And only *thou* recall my erring name!

Mary was still lingering over the lines, when her brother suddenly called to her. He was perfectly sensible, though much exhausted. Taking both her hands in his, he gazed earnestly and fondly in her face, and then he murmured, "You have, Mary, shown me tenderness, care, and devotion, such as my life could scarcely have repaid; and what has been your reward? coldness, and neglect, and cruelty—and a desolate fate!"

"Nay, Lionel," said she, weeping; "do not reproach yourself; my fate is in God's hand, and what he wills is best. I have had WOMAN'S REWARD; the consciousness that, as far as lay in my power, all the energies of my life have been devoted to one beloved object; and this is a blessed thought, dear Lionel!"

A faint sigh escaped his lips, and he feebly pressed her hand; presently he opened his wide dark eyes, and muttered hurriedly, "My father calls me;" and in another moment that restless heart had ceased to beat—that fine vigorous frame lay cold and nerveless on the couch of death—in the pride and prime of his youth, with all the untried future before him, he had perished from the earth; and the handsome, fastidious, admired Lionel was but a painful memory to a few grieving hearts; and to the rest of the world—nothing.

CHAPTER X.

"But oh! the heavy change now thou art gone—
Now thou art gone, and never canst return!"

MILTON.

"————————Now—
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day?"

IBID.

AFTER the first bitter sorrow for such a loss had passed away, Mary turned her mind towards the future. Lady Dorrington had written from Nice, begging her to pay her a long visit, and Mary resolved to go abroad. Mr. Conolly had so far made use of his permitted authority, that she was perfectly independent; and he once more proposed to her to share the very moderate fortune which was his aunt's legacy, but a mournful sigh and shake of the head denied him as plainly as words could have done.

Lady Clarice had gone abroad also, and soon lost the companion with whom she had left her home. Captain Altamont Percy was killed by a fall from his horse, and her child (never very strong) died of an infantine fever during the first hot summer. Any one who had seen Clarice's wild and passionate regret for the husband of her youth, whom, in an hour of infatuation and mad resentment, she had forsaken—or witnessed the tears shed over the body of the handsome, good-natured "Sopsy," and the outrageous sorrow which followed the loss of her child—would have expected her to die of a broken heart; but years rolled on, and found Clarice Lyle, though sobered in disposi-

tion, almost as gay in *manner* as in other days. She made a successful marriage with a foreigner of some distinction, who imagined her a young widow with a good fortune; was reconciled by letter to her father; and lived on the Continent, wisely avoiding any residence in England, and trusting that the errors of her youth were unknown or forgotten.

Mary heard occasionally from Lady Clavering, who had ever done justice to her true-heartedness and persevering efforts for the right, when under the roof of her brother. In this correspondence, which lasted through many, many years, she heard of Clavering's success, of his being one of the first of his own party, and having accepted office on their accession to power. She heard also of his children, the eldest of whom was entering his fourteenth year when Lady Louisa died; an event which grieved and shocked Mary, and struck deeply into the heart of Clavering, who had found her ever the meekest and most affectionate of wives, and who was naturally domestic and attached to his home.

Old Lady Dorrington died also; but Mary still continued to live at Nice, enjoying a small and pleasant society, and reckoned a "perfect treasure" by many a low-spirited and pining individual, to whom her simple songs, her cheerful conversation, and well-stored mind brought hours of forgetfulness both of pain and anxiety.

There was among these one who particularly interested Mary, on account of some real or fancied resemblance to her lost brother. Herbert Percy was a beautiful lad of fifteen, perishing away with hereditary consumption; and was, besides, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The misery of that mother, a weak and nervous woman, made her utterly incapable of amusing, or being any comfort to the dying boy. She would come in, and, sitting down by the sofa, take his hand, and ask him how he felt; then, with her eyes fixed on the glorious blue of those

Italian skies, she would remain awhile thinking of him, and from time to time feverishly and nervously pressing the hand she held, as if to convince herself that *as yet* the object of all her hopes and all her prayers was with her; then, as the choking agony swelled in her heart, she would run out, and shut herself into her room—to weep and wring her hands unseen and unheard, save by God alone. To Herbert Percy Mary was an angel of light. She read to him, sang to him, painted for him, and taught him chess; and, as he gradually grew weaker, she came more often, and sometimes spent the entire day at Percy's Villa. Like Lionel, he was a poet; but his poetry had no gloom or sadness in it. His buoyant and eager heart kept to the last its unwasting fountains of joy: nay, as his corporal strength decayed, his spirit seemed to grow more fervent, as the lamp shines brightest through the most fragile and transparent vase. "Here," said he, as Mary entered, one sunny morning, "here are some verses I want you to set to music; and then you shall sing them to me and my mother: I wrote them yesterday evening, after you went. You see they allude to my dying; not that I believe I *am* dying the least; only my mother is so anxious about me. I assure you, I look forward to being quite well, and to sailing out on the blue bay yonder with you, Mary! Oh, if I could but be there!" and he clasped his eager hands, and turned his brilliant eyes towards the window; while Mary read as follows:—

"Wherefore pity those who die
  In the glory of their spring?
They may live to mourn and sigh,
  And think their life a worthless thing:
Soon that spring-time fades away,
  Soon the leaves and blossoms fall;
Soon with wearied hearts we say,—
  '*Life* is nothing—*Youth* is all!'

Youth! when light the footstep roves
  O'er mountain steep and level plain,
When the fervent spirit loves—
  As it ne'er can love again!

When we feel for other's wo,—
And the sunshine in our breasts,
Lights the world—as Evening's glow
On a barren landscape rests!

Oh! believe, 'tis best to fall,
The sudden arrow through our hearts,
Than run panting on, till all
Strength, and nerve, and hope departs;
Till, like some poor hunted deer
The frighten'd herd have left alone,
We fly, with none our path to cheer—
Youth and our old companions gone!

Or till, like fading flowers, which none
Gathered in their blushing prime
(Which droop their heads beneath the sun,
Withering past their pleasant time);
Carelessly we look on joys
Dearly prized in days gone by—
And the things we loved seem toys,
Scarcely worth a passing sigh.

Weep not for the early dead!
Their's the bright and changeless dream—
In the grave they lay their head,
Thinking men are what they *seem*.
Let the mower wet his scythe—
Let the crimson blossom fall—
Die, while heart and limb are lithe,
'Life is nothing—Youth is all!'"

"My poor Herbert!" said Mary, as, with the tears trembling in her eyes, she imprinted a light kiss on his fair forehead.

"Don't be melancholy," said the boy; "you looked then as my mother always looks—so full of love and pity! But, as I told you, I don't believe I'm dying—I can't believe it. I don't feel ill, or weak, or in any way sinking in the ocean of existence."

There was a pause, and Mary, like poor Mrs. Percy, looked mournfully towards the window.

"I wonder you never were married, my Mary," said Herbert Percy, who had been watching her countenance; "I am sure many and many a man must have loved you—and surely *you* loved somebody? *Do* tell me your own story; do, Mary, from

beginning to end; no story you ever told me would be half so interesting. Come, from beginning to end; and tell it me all, every particular, that it may last till sunset."

Mary turned with a sad and quiet smile; but what answer she was about to make is uncertain, for at that moment her little French maid entered, bringing her English letters and newspapers.

"Come," said Mary, "I will read you the news from England; and that will amuse you."

"No, no," said he, playfully, "indeed it wont; I know it all by inspiration. A great many murders have been committed, and all of them are proved to have been committed by Irishmen, or by men whose parents were of Irish extraction; a great many long dull speeches have been made in the House of Commons, and a great many short foolish ones in the House of Lords. You will find them under the head of 'Parliamentary Proceedings,' and they are all much alike. Then, let me see—oh! Mr. Pain, of Wandsworth, has got a large gooseberry-bush in his garden; from which four gooseberries (each measuring two inches in diameter) were picked in the coldest week of March, the bush having flowered at Christmas. Mr. Dibbs, at Kensington, has an equally preposterous turnip; and Mr. Oxley, of Yorkshire, has found, in the hollow of a tree, a she-fox bringing up a fox-hound puppy, and suckling it affectionately."

"Hush—hush! you will tire yourself talking so much," said Mary, laughing.

"I *must* finish, and then I will be quiet," replied the boy. "After the 'wonderful productions' and 'curious instances,' and 'barbarous outrages,' you have a list of where people are who are not in town (which we at Nice don't want to know); and the outlines of the plots of new plays (which we cannot go to see); advertisements of new books (which we

shall not get for these three months); and the births, deaths, and marriages; and so ends 'News from England.'"

"Well, but I will not give you a newspaper," said Mary, as she broke the seal of the third letter; "I will read you what people say and think, from these two long epistles."

"Worse and worse. All that the newspapers can tell is told again in the letters, three weeks after date. People are said to be *going to be* married, when they have driven off to spend the honeymoon in the country; and that part of the sheet of fair paper which remains is covered with apologies for being so stupid, and explanations *why* they are so stupid; and complaints of the badness of the pen they are writing with; and worse, oh! far worse than all, with a repetition of what *you* wrote in *your* last letter—(like the answer to the king's speech, at the opening of the session):—

'*You tell me that the weather at Nice is favourable, and that you are as comfortable as can be expected: I rejoice to hear it. You also mention the likelihood of your returning to England before long, and spending the Christmas at Walmsley Park or Misletoe Hall—this delights us much,*' &c., &c.—

"No! my Mary, read me no letters—tell me no news—but tell me your own story."

She heard him not. That last letter was in a well-known hand—the handwriting of William Clavering. A murmured exclamation, a gasping sob, broke from the lips of Herbert Percy's companion, and dropping the letter from her cold hand, she fainted.

That his quiet Mary should sob, that his quiet Mary should faint, was to Herbert inexplicable.

"Is any one dead whom you love?" said he, as, supported in Mrs. Percy's arms, Mary recovered and gazed around her.

"No, I am better—I am quite well; it was only the surprise; the—" and Mary wept.

But after this fit of emotion was over she resumed her place by her favourite, and smiling through her tears, said, "*Now* I will tell you my story from beginning to end; and you shall read the letter which—which startled me so."

The promise was fulfilled, and afterward Herbert read as follows:—

"It is so long since I have written to you, that I scarcely know how to begin, or in what way to preface what I am going to say. You remember Frederick Atkins? After your poor brother was dead, Fred. told me the story of his dismissal—his promise to you; but why waste words? I have been a widower two years. If the dregs of a heart, which in its youth was all yours, seem to you still worth acceptance, we may yet share one home. Come back to England and to me; write me word the moment you get to London at what hotel you are staying, and I will immediately obey the summons. Forgive me if my letter seem abrupt and confident. While I write, the fifteen years which have passed since I last addressed you melt into nothing.

"Yours, faithfully,

"CLAVERING."

Within six weeks of the receipt of this letter, Mary sat by a bright coal fire at a hotel in Jermyn-street, awaiting the visit of the lover of her youth. Her heart beat at the steps that approached, and died away in the distance—at every double knock which reverberated through the house. She thought of old days; she thought of Clavering. His noble brow, his expressive smile, his rich curling hair rose to her faithful memory as clear and distinct as in a vision. At that moment the door was flung open; the servant announced "the Earl of Clavering;" and the two, who had been parted so long, stood once more in each other's presence. Mary rose; she trembled

excessively; William Clavering came forward and shook her kindly by the hand; after which he took off his hat, laid that and his stick on the table, drew a chair nearer the fire, and sat down: there was a dead pause. It was broken by an inquiry as to how Mary had borne the journey, and that familiar voice broke at once the spell of change, and time, and restraint which hung upon them. In spite of all her efforts, Mary burst into tears; and Clavering, taking her hand in both his own, murmured—

"We must have no more *sorrow*, Mary."

The dull sunset of a London autumn day faded from the sky; and as the servant brought lights, and placed them on the table, Mary turned eagerly to gaze on Clavering, *the* Clavering of her youth! His dark hair was gray, and getting thin on the temples; his active figure had grown heavy, his lips thin and compressed; his eye, though it had not lost its fire, wore a sadder and more anxious look; and he was altogether the sort of person of whom the chatty chaperon says to her incredulous young lady—

"I assure you, my dear, he *was* the handsomest man of his day."

The brow alone, and broad thoughtful forehead, retained all the noble and imperishable beauty of earlier times; and as Mary's eye rested fondly and sadly on his countenance, she thought to herself—"If *he* is so altered, what must *I* seem to *him!*" But it was a needless fear; Lord Clavering had built no castles in the air, he had not sat brooding with feminine romance over the words and looks of fourteen years ago. He felt lonely; he wanted a mother for his children, a companion for his wearied hours, a fireside after the toils of public life. He *expected* to see Mary look much as she did look—less beauty in her figure, and less smoothness on her cheek; and he was satisfied to read in her faded smile the same tenderness which for *him* it had always worn.

They were married. Some people said it was

ridiculous Lord Clavering marrying again; and some applauded his good sense in choosing a person of so proper an age to preside over his house and daughters; and some abused Mary as an artful person, who had contrived to "to get round" the widower, and ensnare him into matrimony. But to Lord and Lady Clavering it mattered not what the world said. They were exceedingly comfortable together; and if it be urged that the glorious dreams of Mary's youth were realized too late; if it be asserted that so gentle and amiable a person should, by the rules of "poetical justice," have led a happier existence; if it be deemed that her trials were too bitter, and her cup too full, I can only remind the reader that I am but a poor historian of past events; that I do not recollect any instances of poetical justice in real life, and that I conceive the suffering and sorrow of the humble and pure-hearted were specially intended to show how little it is the Creator's will that either man or woman should look to this world's portion of happiness as their REWARD.

THE WIFE.

THE WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"Speak to him kindly, for the man is shy."
Leonice.

TOWARDS the close of the London season of 18—, while masquerades were still the fashion, Ranelagh a favourite resort, George the Fourth the handsomest man of his day, and the power of the patronesses of Almacks undreamed of and unprophesied,—when ladies wore small sleeves and scanty clinging petticoats, and gentlemen fought their duels with swords instead of pistols,—a great fête was given at Richmond. In consequence of the diminished number of the *élite* left in town, the power and pleasure of mortifying and excluding minor fashionables had been waived, or, at least, indulgently exercised. The day was superb; there was little dust, no wind, and the River Thames reflected on its glassy bosom the various clumps of trees and white villas which adorned its banks, without even a ripple to break the picture. These united and unusual advantages were perhaps the cause of the exceeding gayety and good-humour which prevailed among the members of the party assembled on that eventful day. Even those who came by water all the way from Whitehall-stairs were observed to smile as they landed; and there was neither shivering, grumbling, nor impatient

hunger discernible among those who stood on the lawn at the Star and Garter. Such a breakfast had never been given before!

Late in the day arrived the beautiful Mrs. Wilmot. She was always a little late; and to-day more so than usual, having desired her coachman to drive slowly that she might not be annoyed by the dust of the other carriages, and having waited ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at Putney, to allow time for Henry Egerton to gallop to his sister's house and leave his horse and groom there, in compliance with an arrangement, by which Mrs. Wilmot was to be "so very good" as to take Mr. Egerton to Richmond, and bring him back at night. This arrangement, however, I must in justice to both parties declare, was proposed, not by Mrs. Wilmot, but by a little, pale, straw-coloured, diminutive man, not immediately perceived among the quantity of graceful mantles, cloaks, and shawls which filled the britska; but who, nevertheless, was lord and master, not only of the britska itself, but of all it contained—in fact, by Mrs. Wilmot's husband.

Mr. Wilmot was enormously rich; he was a good-natured man, which everybody knew; a well-informed man, which few people believed; and a spirited man, which nobody even guessed. Shy, awkward, and nervous, the most hearty welcome, the most familiar address, never elicited more from him than a trembling smile; and the few spontaneous observations he had ventured to make in the course of his life had invariably been met by one answer (if answer that can be called which was itself interrogatory). The person addressed leaned forward politely, and at once apologized for his own deafness, and requested a repetition of the mysterious murmur by the simple sentence, "*I beg your pardon, sir?*" And so accustomed was Mr. Wilmot to this reply, that had any one, gifted with a quicker hearing than his neighbours, answered directly to the point,

he would have been beyond measure startled and dismayed. Among the many things dreaded and disliked by a shy man, a "breakfast" is perhaps one of the most prominent. Into a crowded room he can easily shuffle unperceived, sink into the first vacant chair, by the first friend, or, happier still, stand edgeways by the door, *apparently* happy and busily employed, answering people's observations on the heat of the room, and the difficulty of getting in and getting out.

A dinner party, by choosing the very latest and duskiest moment, may be joined without much agitation. But a breakfast! *There* you *must* walk a given distance across the lawn to your assembled party; you must talk; you must bow; you must move with the moving groups around you; and a saunter entirely by yourself is as impossible as it would be impolite.

Peter Schlemihl, when most fully alive to the loss of his shadow, never felt half the shame and anxiety which imbittered the moments of Mr. Wilmot when he had to cross a sunny lawn crowded with the young and beautiful; and this it was (since selfishness *must* mingle with our best actions) which made him press upon Henry Egerton the offer of a seat in his britska; anticipating involuntarily, and perhaps unconsciously, the protected manner in which he would glide through the Star and Garter, flanked by the fine figure of his male friend on the one side, and the shawls and beauty of his wife on the other. And he was right: all the women looked at Mr. Egerton as they came in, and all the men at Mrs. Wilmot.

I have before stated that this fête at Richmond differed from almost all others, in being allowed to take place without rain or disappointments of any sort, and in being looked forward to, and enjoyed, with an equal degree of pleasure. But one feature it had in common with all fêtes, past, present, or future,—

namely, a lack of the presence of some of the invited. Among the absent were some who were too lazy, some who were too ill, to come—some who were to leave town the next day, and therefore thought muslin pelisses and white crape hats were better bestowed in the imperials than on their owners' persons—and some few were prevented by the "death of relations."

Nothing is more curious than the utter indifference with which, in the crowded and over-peopled city of London, we receive the news of the decease of those who have lately joined in the same amusements, listened to the same tunes, smiled at the same jests as ourselves. The most sudden, the most unexpected death has scarcely the power to sober us for a moment. The strong man is laid in the grave; the young wife is snatched from her bridegroom; the beloved mother from the bosom of her family; the harp is hushed; the kindly smile has vanished; and yet, except to the few who, as De Staël says, "stand round us, and hide the rest of the world," all this is nothing—is worse than nothing—a theme for idle tongues—an hour's excitement for weary and surfeited hearts.

This is a digression which my readers must pardon, since among those prevented by death of relations must be numbered my heroine, Susan Dalrymple, whose mother's funeral had taken place the day before that on which the fête was given; and who, at the time that Mr. Egerton and Mrs. Wilmot (with their invisible companion) appeared on the lawn of the Star and Garter, was sitting in the very small, very hot drawing-room of their lodgings in Park-street, dressed in the deepest mourning, and with swollen and heavy eyes looking in her sister's face for a reply to a question, or rather an exclamation, which had just escaped her.

Except in the touching history of "Madeline," it has been an almost universal practice to endow all

heroines with transcendent beauty; and Susan Dalrymple certainly formed no exception to the rule. The most Grecian of heads, the most perfect of figures, the clearest and softest complexion were hers; and a variety of expression, seldom seen though often talked of, gave a charm to her beauty which rendered it irresistible. Even in her sorrow she was handsome; I say *even*, because, although in poetry and romance a great deal has been said and written to prove people *more* "beautiful in tears," I remain obstinately of opinion that scarcely any beauty will stand the trial of one night spent in watching and weeping, as poor Susan had watched and wept. Even as she sat then, with her flushed cheek and heavy eyes, in the full glare of that bright summer's day, whose sunshine seemed rather to add to the desolateness of their apartment, and to mock with its glowing smile the darkness and the misery within, her beauty would have struck the most careless and the most cold. It was, perhaps, heightened by the contrast of her appearance with that of her sister, who, sickly, deformed, and dwarfish, yet retained a sort of family likeness to the bright being by her side. She had the same dark eyes, but with a sunk and sullen look, which flashed at times into intolerable fierceness; the same black silken hair, but thin, and drawn away from the high temples and wasted cheek; the same dark Moorish skin, but wanting the exquisite clearness which made you doubt, when you gazed on her sister, whether she was indeed a brunett. In the mouth alone all resemblance was lost; harsh, gloomy, and capable of the most unfeminine intenseness of expression, the mouth of Catharine Dalrymple was the most disagreeable feature in her face, and that of Susan the most lovely. Such as they were, however, they loved each other with an undivided love; and perhaps the devotion of the poor girl, who had never known what it was to *attract* the love of any human

being,—the intense and unselfish admiration with which she regarded her sister, the eagerness with which she served her, the ease with which, for her sake, she mastered a temper naturally violent,—had something more touching and sublime in it than the affection of the happier and more favoured child of nature.

At the time of the fête, which took place at Richmond, Catharine Dalrymple was occupied in sorting and arranging a number of bills and papers, which it was necessary should be settled before the arrival of their guardian, Lord John Haslingden, who was expected the following day.

"Oh, Catharine," exclaimed her sister, "how *can* you cast up sums and look over papers on such a day as this! What does it signify what happens now? We are left alone in the world, and they can only take what little my mother left us. I could not count; I could not read; I could not think!" and a fresh burst of weeping choked the remainder of the sentence.

"I know you could not, Susan, and that is the very reason why I am occupied at this moment. My dear mother told me what she wished done, and I hope to settle it all before to-morrow. It is not agreeable, certainly, to be obliged to occupy one's self when one would fain sit down and weep;" and, as she spoke the last words, her voice, always low and sweet, became almost inaudible; "but it is needful, and therefore—"

The effort over nature failed, and, flinging herself into Susan's arms, the orphan sisters wept together. Long, long they wept, and the summer sun had faded from the sky when Catharine roused herself, and, ringing for lights, said, as she imprinted a kiss on her sister's forehead, "You must bathe your eyes, and lie down on the sofa, till I come back to make tea."

It was precisely at that moment that, as Mrs. Wil-

mot's carriage approached Putney Bridge, she said, half *to* and half *at* her companion,—

"I do not think Mr. Henry Egerton has been well amused to-day; he misses his usual flirtation with pretty Susan Dalrymple."

"No, I missed no one," said Egerton, gazing earnestly at her face; "all I wished, or ever *shall* wish to see, was there."

The gathering shades of evening prevented the glow which passed over the lady's conscious cheek from being visible; but it was with a little half-choked sigh that she replied,—

"And yet they said you were going to marry her two months ago."

"They wronged me, then, for I never thought of marrying her; and two months ago," added he, with marked emphasis, "I was not so fortunate as to know, intimately, one who has the power to make me forget all others."

And as he spoke the carriage stopped, and he slightly, very slightly, pressed Mrs. Wilmot's hand.

"Mr. Egerton! I really cannot—"

"What is the matter, my dear Clara?" said the awakened Mr. Wilmot.

"Nothing, but that the moment is come when I must leave you," replied Egerton, gayly. "Good-night! Good-night, Mrs. Wilmot; I shall bring you a bouquet from my sister's garden to-morrow!"

The heart of the person he addressed beat quickly and half-angrily at this appointed visit for the next day. She untied the strings of her bonnet, and leaned out to the fresh evening breeze; and Mr. Wilmot resumed his broken slumber, from which he never awoke till he reached the door of his splendid mansion in Grosvenor-square. There, in a sleepy tone, he inquired whether his wife would drink tea, and being answered in the negative, wished her good-night,—a wish which was not so speedily fulfilled, if by "good-night" he meant a night's quiet rest.

Vague self-reproach, and the confused consciousness of past wrong and future perplexity, burdened the heart of the coquet. Faint resolutions were made to forbid the visits of Mr. Henry Egerton in Grosvenor-square; plans were formed for an explanation, which might allow of the continuance of those agreeable morning calls, without allowing him to say "*those sort of things*;" but the last and strongest thought, ere she sank to sleep, was the conjecture of the truth or falsehood of his statement respecting Susan Dalrymple. We should be loath to decide against the truth of a man of honour, and a man of the world, but it is certain that, on that same night, Susan turned away her pale face, with its long dishevelled curls, from the glass before which she was sitting, and murmured, without lifting her eyes,—

"I wonder, Catharine, that Henry Egerton has never been here to ask after us;" and Catharine replied, "Perhaps he is out of town."

CHAPTER II.

Lady John Haslingden and Mrs. Dalrymple were sisters; both were daughters of a rich and respectable merchant, whose only foible was the two common one of a constant struggle to rise to the grade above him. A lord was his delight; a marquis his admiration; and a duke, at once an object of adoration and awe. His daughters were both beautiful girls, and, as they grew up, excited the praise and envy of many. Poor Mr. Brooksby's head was turned; and before Adelaide was seventeen and Louisa fifteen he had ceased to consider men in any other light than as good connections—better connections—best connections. From habit, and perhaps also partly from opinion, he abused the English aristocracy; and was wont frequently to quote the sentiments of his grandfather (an eminent tailor, and one of the cleverest men of his day), who asserted that young English noblemen never paid their debts—always ran out their estates—had neither honour nor faith among them—cheated their industrious workmen—made love to their trades-people's daughters—and borrowed money at usurious interest;—from whom some of the young noblemen of his day might have borrowed money, or to whom they might eventually have paid some of their debts—history does not say; but it is certain that the tailor made a large fortune, and looked down with an honest pride upon those who had squandered theirs away, or who had inherited none to squander. With care and pains he educated his orphan grandson in the way in which he

wished him to go; and little did Mr. James Brooksby consider, when he disinherited the daughter who had married a young lieutenant in the navy, and presented the one who espoused Lord John Haslingden with fifty thousand pounds on her wedding-day, how ill fulfilled were the intentions of the elder Mr. Brooksby, in thus flinging into the lap of one needy young nobleman what he had taken from the pockets of so many; nor how ludicrous was the opposition which vented itself in words against a class, which by deeds, he aided to support. Mr. James Brooksby thought not of this; nor did the ghost of the elder Mr. Brooksby arise and say (although it might have said so with great truth), "Short-sighted grandson! day by day riches, which are the source of power, are gathered by the middle class, called by the great 'the people;' and instead of keeping that power among themselves, and opposing it to the empty pride of hereditary rank, they greedily swallow the bait, and give back in one generation what was won by them in the preceding time. A tailor, a merchant, and a bookseller (all clever and excellent men) make among them a million or two of money; and, lo! their granddaughters buy themselves nice young lords at two hundred thousand pounds apiece, and the fluctuating sum is again in the hands of the aristocracy!"

Perhaps Mr. James Brooksby might have been a happier father if he had been a poorer man—for of the daughter he had abjured he saw nothing; and of the Lady John Haslingden very little. He was not in her "*set*," her friends were not suited to him, nor he to them; and "rich old Brooksby" found that the advantages he had bought for his daughter by no means extended to himself; and that he who might have commanded every luxury which the great enjoy, was yet deprived of those blessings which, thank God, are as open to the poorest as to the most wealthy. For him there was *no fireside;* his daughter was certainly fond of him; so fond, that it was but rarely

that her vanity made her feel ashamed of her father; and she was always willing to dine alone with him; or *endeavour* (the endeavour rarely answered) to make a party to suit him, or stay three long dull weeks at his place in Cheshire. The result was perhaps exactly what, if she had been the cleverest and the most scheming of women, she would have wished to contrive.

Mr. Brooksby was thoroughly convinced of her attachment to himself, and at the same time rarely intruded into a society where he was exceedingly bored, and very unwelcome; contented to be at five successive christenings, the great man of the day, and to talk constantly, in *his* set, of his son-in-law Lord John. "Good fellow, that son-in-law of mine—yes, Adelaide is a fortunate woman—husband a capital fellow," were the expressions he sometimes gave vent to while sitting over a bottle of the very best port with a couple of friends; and while the friends, who had pretty daughters, highly approved of his port and his plans—those who had none, inwardly wondered that a man, who had such a good cellar, cared about the matches his daughters made.

Half understood and half appreciated by those with whom he had voluntarily connected himself, Lord John Haslingden deserved any and all the encomiums which in Mr. Brooksby's peculiar style were bestowed upon him: he was high-minded, well principled, honourable, and excellent. And when at five-and-twenty he married one of the beautiful Miss Brooksbys, the worst his foes could say (or even his friends) was, that the old marquis his father had done every thing in his power to promote the match, the settlement upon his younger children being next to nothing, and that he, Lord John, was a fortunate fellow. "A lucky dog" they called him as he sprang into the carriage where his young bride was seated, the day they were made one; and a lucky dog they continued to think him even now, when, like most

other men of three-and-forty, he had learned to think with a sigh how much of illusion and consequent disappointment belongs to the days of our youth; and how easily those who are made *one* in St. George's Church can contrive afterward to live as *two*. Whether Captain Dalrymple was an equally meritorious character, Mr. Brooksby never knew, and therefore my readers are left in ignorance. He was a very handsome man, if the miniature which hung suspended by a black riband round his widow's neck was at all like him, and had died of one of those lingering internal wounds which cause so much suffering, and which he had received at the siege of some fort in India, in an engagement sufficiently dangerous to give brave men a chance of losing their lives, but not sufficiently remarkable to entitle them to reward while living, or celebrity when dead. The life, which was but as a drop in the ocean of blood spilt in his country's service, was all in all to his wife and children; and the war which cost Tippoo Sultan his life, and gave the first dawn of Wellington's glory, had also, more remotely, the unimportant effect of shortening the days of a broken-hearted woman, and leaving the beautiful Susan Dalrymple and her sister orphans, dependant on the charity of relations for all but mere subsistence. When Mrs. Dalrymple was dying, she called to her side Catharine, and, pointing to the drooping and exhausted figure of her youngest daughter, who knelt with her face concealed by the bedside, she said, faintly, "Kate, I have written to Lord John Haslingden—I hope, I believe, he will show kindness to you both; and Susan will marry, and you will again have a home. My sister I have not seen for many years, owing to your poor father's long residence abroad, and Lord John's illness last spring; but she used to be kind-hearted—and I believe, if it had not been for my father's displeasure—well—it is over now, and may Heaven forgive me as I part in peace with all on earth!"

Catharine heard, and understood; and while her heart shrank from the proud and titled lady, who dared not brave a rich father's displeasure by showing kindness to the sister of her youth, she yet felt that it was the only resource left by which they might escape that worst evil of extreme poverty—want of protection. It was with anxious hope, therefore, that she looked forward to the arrival of her uncle, and with a beating heart that she descended to answer his summons. When the door opened, and she stood before him, her figure shrouded in a black silk mantle, and her heavy dark eyes rendered yet more sullenly languid in appearance by the tears she had shed, a visible and irrepressible expression of dismay replaced the kind and pitying smile with which Lord John had turned to greet his orphan ward—"I wished," said he, hesitatingly—"I wished to speak with Miss Dalrymple."

"*I* am Miss Dalrymple!" answered Catharine; and she smiled bitterly, for the thought of her heart thus answered his involuntary glance:—"Yes, I, the pale deformed creature, whose appearance so startles you—*I* am the child of that lovely mother—*I* am the trusted and loved being whom, with her dying breath, she enjoined to petition you for kindness. Such as I am, *she* loved me, prayed for me, looked on me with pleasure; reared me from the little feeble, unsightly infant that crawled to her knee to my blighted and unattractive womanhood; and fancied, as she gazed, that there was some trace even of beauty in the familiar face which to you is a sight of pain!"

Thought is lightning quick; and one minute's pause sufficed for these reflections, and for the gathering in Catharine's heart of that dark hatred which the deformed feel instinctively towards those who appear conscious of their deformity.

But Lord John was not a man to be hated; aware that his manner had given pain, he eagerly stepped forward, and taking her hand in his, and lightly kiss-

ing her forehead, he said, "Then let me greet you as my niece." He explained briefly and kindly all that related to her mother's affairs, and finally informed her that Lady John Haslingden requested them to consider their home for the future with her, and would herself have come to fetch them, but that one of her little girls had sprained her ankle by a fall, and she did not like to leave her.

Catharine's spirits felt lighter than they had done for many days, and she went to fetch her sister. It was with a smile of affectionate triumph that she watched the handsome and expressive countenance of her guardian, as his eyes fell upon Susan's. "This is my sister, Lord John. She is not like me."

"I hope her *heart* is like yours," answered he, as he turned from the beautiful and sorrowful face of the youngest to look once more on Catharine; and it seemed to him that he had wronged her in thinking her so very plain.

The next morning a travelling-carriage with a servant in deep mourning in the rumble, and two ladies and a gentleman in deep mourning within, passed rapidly under the windows of a house in Park Lane, where Mr. Egerton was standing. It was not, however, the rapidity of the motion which prevented him from observing that he was acquainted with its occupants, but the all-engrossing nature of his employment. He was assisting Mrs. Wilmot to arrange in a china flower-stand a second bouquet from his sister's villa at Putney.

CHAPTER III.

"THE course of true love never did run smooth:" but if I wished to represent a situation, in which it is next to impossible that it should, I would name that of a young girl without rank or fortune, introduced into what is called "society" in London. She is given an opportunity of judging and valuing (or rather of misjudging or over-valuing) those advantages which depend on manner, exterior, and accomplishments—and gradually learns to measure her opinions by the rules of the multitude, because always surrounded by a multitude who loudly decry some things, and as loudly praise others. The opinions she thus echoes are generally unsound, false, and frivolous; first, because in that theatre of vanity and display, "the world," the *habits* of a man's life, and not his actions or intentions, are the subject of censure or approbation; and secondly, because the people most forward to *give* an opinion, are generally those least capable of forming one. One other reason might perhaps be assigned for the unsoundness of the decisions people come to respecting their neighbours in "the world," and that is the extraordinary want of cordiality and frankness which exists among them. A man is not requested (scarcely indeed would he be allowed if willing) to explain his reasons for taking certain steps respecting the disposal of his own fortune, the marriage of his own children, the advancements of his own interests;—but every one secretly judges him, and pronounces what has induced him to be "so shabby," "so tyrannical," or "so time-serving;" while, with all the bad faith of refined civility, they congratulate

or condole, smile and flatter to his face, the gentleman of whom they express so bad an opinion behind his back. On the other hand, the individual of whom so much is said hears at length (after it has passed through a multitude of mouths) an exaggerated account of the censures passed upon him; and hears, moreover, that the first and most eager among his self-elected judges is the man he has been accustomed to consider as his friend. Well, it might naturally be supposed that he would go to his friend, and ask him why he had circulated reports to his prejudice, without even examining into the truth; but not so, a man of "the world" would be exceedingly laughed at who asked any explanation, or wished for any satisfaction, beyond the customary one of a bullet through his head: and as, in spite of the frivolity of the causes for which you *may* fight, you can hardly challenge a man for calling you harsh or stingy, he remains passive; behaves to his friend as usual, but inwardly reflecting on his own injuries, exclaims with the Psalmist, "*all men are liars;*" or, cools to his friend, and transmits to his curly-headed son an hereditary dislike, which vents itself years afterward in the speech, "No, I hate him; he abused my father." Perhaps if that father had frankly explained his cause of anger, and had heard from that welcome voice a frank denial of the charge, he might have lived and died with a better opinion of mankind, and *his* friend might have been also the friend of his son.

With women this habit of condemning unheard, and judging without proof, is stronger even than with men; and this from several causes. They have more leisure to be "lookers on" than the busier half, who are playing at the great game of life; and having less occasion to act themselves, take a greater interest in observing the actions of others. They are educated, if not in habits of actual insincerity, at least in habits of concealment, which makes them

more readily admit that there may be a difference between the *apparent* and the *real* in the actions of others. They are jealous, and will not allow those who are running the same race with themselves to carry a lighter weight; they are vain, and what they blame in another determines a perfection in themselves. False tresses are an abomination to the fairy who might veil herself in her own golden curls; rouge shocks (more particularly) those whose ivory skins contrast too well with their dark brows and hair to tempt the addition of another tint; and the horror of plaited and fulled petticoats can only adequately be expressed by her who looks so well in draped muslin that she could only look better as a painter's Musidora. Women are besides more credulous than men, for they have been more accustomed to hear without inquiry and to believe without examining. They take their religion from the instructers of their youth, their politics from the companions of after years; and seldom attempt to judge of either by the unassisted efforts of their own reason. They receive gossip in the same unquestioning way that they have received more important subjects, and in general (for of course there are exceptions) a girl, who has been long enough in "the world" to learn its ways (though not long enough to have reflected upon them), affirms of her neighbours, that "he is clever"—"she is coquettish"—"they are spiteful,"—not that she *knows*, or is capable of judging of the talents, morals, or disposition of any of the parties concerned, but because she "*has heard*" that it is so.

Oh! it is a lamentable thing to see how contentedly, in that narrow circle, we see with the eyes and speak with the voice of others. It is a lamentable thing to hear the fresh smiling mouth of seventeen say quietly—"Mrs. So-and-so is a dreadful flirt—she was in love with Lord Crosserton and with Mr. Laxenby, and that Mr. Lance Gibbs, who ruined

himself at Melton—Oh! she is very naughty, I assure you."

Young girl, of whom do you speak, and of what do you accuse her in those vague words? Of what? You would blush crimson, and feel offended, if any one were to put into plainer expressions what you have yet inconsiderately advanced as your own opinion. You "have heard" she is "very naughty;" and those who told you, perhaps, only "heard it," and those who told them. Yet you and they, and all, have advanced, each on his or her deliberate and separate authority, that a married woman is false to her husband, has been *in love* with three different men since her union at the altar with one; and is (in the language peculiar to those who shrink not from vice, but its name) "*very naughty.*" Does it never strike you, that the men to whom your observation is addressed, or by whom it is overheard, though they smile their admiration at your beauty, and their assent to your belief in the lady's misconduct, may possibly yet retain so much good sense and justice of feeling as to shrink from the idea of *taking* for a wife any one who can speak so lightly of the *errors* of a wife? Young girl, it does *not* strike you, because you did not mean to speak lightly of crime; you did not reflect upon what you were saying; you only repeated what you "had heard:" but those who heard *you* gave you credit for expressing your own opinion. What is it makes a man say, "No, when *I* marry, it shall not be to a London girl?" Why not? A London girl is not *in fact* worse than a girl brought up in the country, nor more likely to misconduct herself; perhaps *less* so, for the youngest has felt something of the hollowness of the pleasures of "the world," and is less likely to be tempted hereafter; but the man of the world hears the young girl of the world speak carelessly of crime, and yet without indulgence; he hears her value a man by his fortune, his beauty, his powers of pleasing in

society; and an indistinct vision presents itself of a pretty quiet creature making breakfast for a family party in a country-house, soberly estimating men's merits by their qualities; looking as fresh as the rose in her muslin gown, and utterly ignorant of "London gossip."

A belief in the purity of a woman's mind is essential to the devotion of man's love. There is little of that belief, and consequently of that devotion in the London world. But I imagine many a girl has been jilted *before* she became a bride, who would have inspired a stronger and deeper passion had she spoken more tenderly of other women *after* they became brides. "London men" are proverbially callous and selfish—"London women" heartless and coquettish. What! is there then a separate race of human beings created to dwell in that town, while Manchester and Birmingham remain virtuously peopled? or does driving through the gates of Hyde Park in a travelling carriage alter suddenly the whole heart and mind? No! but the demon of gossip dwells in a dense and idle crowd—falsifying the medium through which each gazes on the other—making merits of vices, and ridicules of merits, till there is no trust, or faith, or good feeling between man and man; no confidence, or devotion, or respect between man and woman.

All these reflections Susan Dalrymple (who had then just attained her sixteenth birthday) was too young and inexperienced to make at the time she came out. Naturally kind-hearted, and educated strictly, she was less prone to blame or speak carelessly of others than most of her acquaintances; but eager and imaginative, she was easily persuaded to affix a false value to all that won the favour of the world—all that dazzled, attracted her; and from all that bore not the world's seal of success upon it she turned as unworthy her notice. Very, very beautiful she was, and she knew it; but of her beauty she was not so vain as of her power of pleasing in conversation; and very few indeed there

were on whom the mixture of playfulness, tenderness, and enthusiasm, which gave the light and shade to her words, as they did to her character, failed to make an impression. In the short season which had preceded her mother's death, every day had been a day of triumph and of intoxication. Henry Egerton was the last to yield to the fascination; and long after he felt it he did his very best to appear careless and indifferent. But against real carelessness and real indifference the imitation can do little. Susan Dalrymple only saw a handsome young man, who appeared to care little for her society; and as there were a great many equally handsome young men who prized it exceedingly, she thought no more about him, but pursued her own amusements, unconscious of the struggles in his heart.

This alone was wanting to *fix* Henry Egerton. Accustomed to dazzle, to interest, to conquer wherever he appeared, the difficulty in the present instance added immensely to his passion. That restless craving for general admiration, which was one of his principal faults, ceased, or was superseded in his heart. He saw, he heard nothing but Susan when she was present, and in her absence he thought of her only. What *she* approved was his sole standard of conduct, and all former pursuits were forgotten in this new and all-absorbing feeling. Success in all he wished to gain had been the destiny of Henry Egerton since his birth; and in the poor matter of winning a woman's heart it was not to be supposed that he should fail. After a certain number of balls, water-parties, and morning calls, all of which gave the usual opportunities of which London lovers avail themselves to express their admiration; after his rich voice had mingled in a certain number of duets, and he had scornfully walked through a certain number of minuets; after his dark watchful eyes had encountered Susan Dalrymple's every time she entered a ball-room for a certain number of evenings, and they had talked together on every possible

topic, gay, sad, or inspiring—the usual result took place—they loved.

They loved! Oh! how immeasurably distant were the degrees of their mutual affection. She loved as woman first loves—with her whole heart, and with unfaltering trust in the object of her attachment—without a doubt, without a fear, as to what the future may bring forth. *He* loved as a man of the world *must* love, who, in his idle pursuit of pleasure, has encountered only the idle votaries of pleasure; who has lived so much among the vicious of the other sex, that he almost doubts the existence of virtue among them; and who looks back upon a series of past attachments, all or most of which in their commencement promised as brightly as the present.

It was just before Easter that Henry Egerton began to pay particular attention to Miss Dalrymple. Circumstances so far favoured them, that they spent the Easter in the same country-house; and Susan's mother (whose lot, moderate as it appeared in the eyes of her father and Lady John Haslingden, had apparently satisfied her ambition) chaperoned them through the long walks of lilacs and laburnums—listening, with a sad and quiet smile, to the eager observations and joyous laugh of her daughter and her companion, and looking forward contentedly to the day when the latter should ask her permission to marry Susan. Mrs. Dalrymple did not belong to the *order* of chaperons to which Henry Egerton had been accustomed. She neither prevented his companionship with her portionless girl on account of his own very limited expectations, nor hastened its conclusion by asking him his "intentions;" he therefore wisely judged that she did not perceive his attachment; and while he could not help thinking her dull of observation, he yet felt more at his ease than he would have done had he fancied every word weighed, and every look watched, with a view to ensnare or reject him. He was pleasanter, thus freed from the restraint of *guarding* his sentences; and as the frank and modest

sweetness of Susan's manners won daily more and more upon him, he began to feel more real affection for her than he had ever felt for any other human being; and an involuntary conviction of the truth and simplicity of her character led him to talk openly of himself and his affairs. He talked to her in their long rambles of his orphaned childhood, his neglected youth, his pecuniary difficulties, his faults (it is so pleasant to talk of our faults to those who love us), of his disappointment in some pursuits, of his success in others; and Susan listened with pity, doubt, wonder, and a desire to console and reform him, which beamed in her eye and glowed on her cheek as she timidly advised, or still more timidly condemned.

That pleasant Easter passed away, and the cool spring, with its quieter amusements, gave way to the broiling London summer—a season always devoted to the refreshing exercise of dancing in very hot crowded rooms, at those hours when children, peasants, and animals (unreasoning and half-educated beings) are locked in a fast and quiet sleep. For the first time in his existence, a London life *bored* Henry Egerton; for the first time since he was a young lad with a kite and fishing-rod, the remembrance of green fields, blue skies, and fresh breezes haunted him as he leaned against the pillars of some stately ball-room, and asserted their superiority over carpets, chalked floors, chandeliers, and the scent of perfumed *esprits*. He longed to be in the country, and fancied his favourite flowers were lilacs and laburnums. He regretted he was poor; thought of selling his commission in the Guards; and grew restless and unhappy. His discontent was communicated to Susan Dalrymple, who soothed him with her sweet voice and gentle words to the best of her ability. One bright day in particular they held a long conversation as they walked through the grounds of Stafforth Lodge, where a breakfast was given. The murmur of busy voices, heard from time to time

between the pauses of the band which played on the lawn in front of the houses; the joyous groups of dancers on the terraces beyond; the swift boats gliding up and down the water—all the varied sights and sounds of this scene of gayety were lost to them, —they thought only of each other! Henry Egerton was really sad and out of spirits, and more than usually inclined to talk over his childhood's dreams; he described his mother to Susan, and grew more moved as he observed the emotion with which he was listened to. His mother had died young, beautiful, and beloved, and a vague dream was all he retained of the short days passed by her side.

"What beautiful roses!" said he, as he twisted off a cluster which bent invitingly across the path; "what would I give to be able to give them into her gentle hand as in those happy days! I should be a better and a happier man if she had remained on earth; one *real* tie, one pleasure not founded on vanity or vice, would have been mine. She loved me, and I should have been guided by her counsel. But it is no matter now: what I am, I am. I might have been different; and so these roses *might* have been valued only because they were my gift."

As he spoke, he flung them from him; but they reached not the ground. Susan caught them, and, as she raised her glistening eyes to her lover's face, she said, timidly, "*I* will value them, and keep them."

Henry Egerton paused, and gazed on her blushing and radiant face. At that moment he felt as if all sacrifices were light in comparison of losing that simple heart. He drew from his finger a ring, and said, hurriedly, "Let me give you something that will last longer than those flowers. *This* will remind you of me as long as you choose to keep it."

It was soon after this little scene, that the illness commenced which terminated in Mrs. Dalrymple's death. Mrs. Wilmot had long wished to make a

conquest of Henry Egerton, and his vanity was not proof against the notice of a beauty who was at present "the rage." She had married Mr. Wilmot at Rome, and had come out as a bride in London. Every one knows that to be *a bride*, in that set where constant novelty and fresh amusements are so eagerly sought, adds considerably to the perfections of the individual.

Many a girl whose moderate attractions remained undiscovered during the springs she passed as a young "miss," is suddenly made aware that she is charming and beautiful when she becomes a wife. In all classes a bride is an interesting object, and it is natural that it should be so. The young creature whose affections are just given, whose destinies are just linked for ever, the realities and duties of whose life are just begun, is doubtless one whom no thinking being can view *without* interest; but the interest taken in a bride in London society is not exactly of this sort. It is not sympathy, it is not kindness, it is not even curiosity; but a hard unindulgent speculation as to what were her motives in the match she has made, and what will eventually be her conduct in the position in which she is placed.

Such were the feelings with which Mrs. Wilmot was welcomed to "society," and to these was superadded the sort of idle envy men feel, *without* being in love, when a pretty woman appears among them already appropriated;—a feeling aptly reproved by Lord John Haslingden, who, having listened for some time to a young captain in the Blues, who was professing his dislike of girls, and his preference for the society of young married women, replied, somewhat impatiently, "Pooh, my dear fellow, a young married woman is only a girl who belongs to somebody else."

CHAPTER IV.

"Den Göttern gleich'ich nicht! Zu tief ist es gefühlt;
Dem Wurme gleich'ich, der den Staub durchwühlt;
Den, wie es sich im Staube nährend lebt,
Des Wandrers Tritt vernichtet und begräbt!"

Faust.

When Susan and her sister were presented to Lady John Haslingden, at Moorfields, the first sensation that struck them was one of wonder how any countenance so regularly beautiful could be so utterly unattractive.

Her cold and brilliant eyes, well-defined and slightly hooked nose, and small firm mouth were all according to the rules of sculpture and drawing, and yet were all equally unsatisfactory to the gazer. The eyes seemed as if they had never known the meaning of the words love or gayety—the lips as if they had never uttered the word "welcome" till that day; and Susan shrank from the slight chilling kiss they bestowed, as much as poor Catharine did from the look of mingled curiosity and disgust bestowed on her pale and unattractive face.

They arrived just in time for dinner, and it was not long before that gloomy group, a family in deep mourning, were assembled round the dinner-table. Nothing could be more formal or stately than the habits of the inmates of Moorfields. Lady John Haslingden always addressed her lord by his name and title at full length, and generally spoke with a slight and grave nod, by way of preface. Scarcely five sentences were exchanged during the repast, and half a dozen tall servants in black liveries moved up and down the immense dining-room, taking away

your recently replenished plate just as you were beginning to eat, and bringing you, *en revanche*, every dish your wandering eye appeared to fix upon.

Splendour was a novelty to Catharine, whose unsightly appearance had prevented her accompanying her younger sister during the short season which had preceded her mother's death; and even Susan had been accustomed to separate, in her own mind, the magnificence of rooms of *reception* and the more moderate comfort of those appropriated to the continual occupation of the family. When, therefore, they gazed on the heavy crimson curtains which fell in rich draperies to the ground, the massive and brilliant plate, splendid pictures, and the marble statues at each end of the room, they felt a confused and vague impression of awe, and wondered in what degree riches added to the happiness of life.

Their uncomfortable scrambling existence abroad; the small details of poverty, which seem so little and are so much; the thousand-and-one minute economies which are so insufferably irksome, practised in order to enable Susan to come out properly dressed; the confined lodgings in Park-street, which were all darkness on one side, and all glare on the other; the privation of fruit and flowers, and other luxuries, so small that they pass unnoticed among those who are accustomed to consider them as necessaries —all these past experiences arose to the minds of the young sisters; and Catharine sighed heavily as she thought of her poor mother, who, with feeble and declining health and broken spirits, was forced to bear all those petty and yet *wearing* discomforts, while her proud sister sat in her magnificent drawing-room, afraid to offend the father, who could yet heap more riches upon her, by favouring his banished daughter.

After dinner was over, the old butler ushered in the children. Five pretty Brooksby-Haslingdens made their appearance, and Lord John, whose man-

ner had somewhat partaken of the chilling coldness of his wife's, relapsed into cordiality as he took a fat fair baby on his knee, and greeted each of the others with a word of kindness as they passed by him with little prim steps towards their mother. After the servants had left the room, Lady John conversed with somewhat more freedom; she inquired into the favourite tastes and accomplishments of the sisters, and seemed disappointed at finding Catharine possessed of more talent than the beautiful Susan. She either could not, or did not think it worth while to conceal the revulsion of feeling she experienced every time she looked at her unfortunate protégée. Even her kind speeches (if they might so be termed) had bitterness in them. She commented on the "trial" it must have been to her poor dear sister to find care and expense alike bestowed in vain towards remedying the defects of nature; begged Catharine would never think of making such a painful effort as to appear when any strangers were at Moorfields; and hoped the "dear girls" were fond of each other, as of course the elder must always remain a burden upon Susan, should the latter be fortunate enough to make a "good connection." And all this she said with a cold, grave, composed countenance, as if she was uttering the most proper commonplaces in the world. The glow went and came on Susan's brilliant cheek, and the ready tears trembled in her large dark eyes; but Catharine sat apparently unmoved, only a more sallow paleness overspread her face, and the fixed curve of her sullen lip grew even harsher than usual.

After they had returned to the drawing-room, Lady John, who seemed to look forward with some vanity to chaperoning her beautiful niece, cross-examined her as to the acquaintances she had formed, and the pleasure she had found in London gayeties, adding, that when "poor dear Louisa" and herself

were girls, she was always amazingly bored in society.

"Dear me!" said Susan, simply, "I wonder at that. Even going out alone, as I used to do, I was always exceedingly happy, and I have often thought if I had had a companion it would have been a perfect paradise—but Catharine never went with me."

"Of course not," said Lady John, with a glance of mingled astonishment, contempt, and pity—"of course not; poor dear Louisa did very sensibly never to allow her to appear; indeed, I should have followed the same plan myself, had one of my children been similarly afflicted."

"Why does mamma look so at you? and why did you never go anywhere with your sister?" said Fanny Haslingden (a little girl of eight, who, with a brother two years her senior, had been allowed to remain half an hour longer than usual to celebrate her papa's return). "Why did your mamma never let you be seen?" persisted she, in spite of the "Oh, Fanny!" from her brother, and the angry "Hush, child!" of Lady John; and as she spoke she advanced towards Catharine, and looked up with questioning eyes in her face.

"Don't you see I'm crooked?" said the latter, in a vehement and bitter tone, and the child shrank from the glance of her wild angry eyes back to its incensed mother.

There was a moment's pause; and then the boy, whose cheek had flushed at the ill-judged question of his little sister, crept up to Catharine's side, and taking her hand, said, softly,—

"People are not so pretty when they are crooked, but they are quite as much loved."

There was something in the simple sentence, the sweet frank face, the grasp of that little gentle consoling hand, that went to the heart of the person he addressed: she gazed on his open brow for a moment—stooped and kissed it—and burst into tears.

"That poor deformed creature seems to have a dreadful temper," said Lady John to her husband, who entered the drawing-room after the sisters had retired.

"Has she?" said Lord John, with a pre-occupied sigh. "Try and bear with her as well as you can, my dear Adelaide; be patient; consider what an infliction it is!"

"Infliction, indeed! I should really have gone frantic if any of my children had been like that girl; I should have wished it might please Heaven to take it every hour of its life; to be sure, poor dear Louisa was very unfortunate—*very* unfortunate."

"The other girl is singularly pretty—beautiful; and as Catharine has, according to all accounts, been accustomed to live quiet and retired, it is only for Susan that you need provide amusements and ornaments: but pray make them both comfortable—*pray* do, Adelaide;" and Lord John earnestly wrung her hand as he spoke.

"To be sure I shall make them comfortable. Who asked them here?" said the lady, peevishly. "Did I not agree to your proposal of having them, without even consulting my father?"

"Common humanity, Adelaide—"

"Common humanity does not oblige one to take charge of other people's children. I might have boarded them with some respectable family in the country, and even then should have done more than most people do by their poor relations."

"My God! Adelaide! they are your own sister's children; but if on seeing them you repent your intention—if you do not like to have them with you, say so—I have no wish to force them upon you."

"I *do* wish to have them with me, only you are so provoking. If I had not wanted them I should not have allowed them to come. All I said was, that I *might* have boarded them in the country, and I am sure that poor object would be better in the family of

some quiet clergyman than living here, where we are constantly seeing people. However, I hope Susan will marry well, and then she can take her."

As Lady John Haslingden passed proudly through the corridor, she stopped at the door of one of the rooms, and opening it softly, entered, shading the light with her hand. It was the sleeping apartment of her children, and her eye, which glanced almost carelessly past four small white cotts, rested on the fifth with an expression of scrutiny which would have been anxiety in any face less cold and changeless than her own.

"He sleeps very quietly these few nights past, nurse; I am in hopes he is getting strong at last; the doctor does not think he will have any more of those dreadful fits."

"Indeed, my lady, I hope not!" said the nurse; "I hope the blessed darling will go on well and prosperous;" but the woman's countenance (had the mother looked up) would have belied her words; and experience had made her judgment accurate.

The fat fair baby, which had been so welcomed by its father, and which at this moment was the subject of Lady John's anxiety, never grew, and never throve; it remained to all outward appearance a fat fair child, and the curse of idiotcy followed the suffering of its early years. Perhaps in after life, when the flattered mother stole away from her guests and her more favoured offspring, to pay a short visit to the wretched being whose existence was unknown except to its parents and attendants, she thought sometimes of the harsh words spoken to Catharine Dalrymple, when she allowed her to depart mortified and miserable to her own room, the first night of her arrival at Moorfields, to weep—

"And find that Nature's errors were her own!"

CHAPTER V.

The subject of conversation most usual with Lady John Haslingden, in the presence of her nieces, was the necessity of what is termed "a good connection;" she never settled a plait in Susan's gown, or arranged a curl upon her brow, that she did not directly or indirectly allude to this all-engrossing theme. She never mentioned the name of a male acquaintance, that she did not also add all the pros and cons respecting his eligibility as a husband, and beg and entreat Susan to treat him accordingly. She seemed to have but one end and aim in view, and that was, to marry her beautiful niece according to her own ideas of prosperity.

It might have been about two months from the date of the arrival of the orphaned girls at Moorfields, and Susan was bending over her sister, watching the completion of a drawing the latter had made of Frederick Haslingden (the boy whose speech had so touched her), when Lady John, who had been writing busily for some time, called her to her side.

"My love," said she, scrutinizing her dress and appearance as she spoke through an eye-glass, "Lord John has invited a large shooting-party down here, and our autumnal gayeties (which the death of your poor dear mother had delayed) are now to begin. I have given orders to my maid Thérèse to dress you according to her own taste, which is perfect; and I have sent to town for some jet ornaments, and some other necessary little articles which I thought you might want. Have you any pearls?"

"No, aunt."

"Any diamonds? of course I only mean combs and such trifles."

"No, aunt."

"Have you no trinkets of any description?"

"None," said Susan, with a sigh, "except my father's picture."

"Well," said Lady John, smiling coldly, "simplicity is perhaps better suited to your style, but we shall see what Thérèse thinks. What became of your mother's pearls?"

"Catharine has them."

"Catharine! why, good Heaven, what can *she* want with pearls?"

"My mother gave them to me," said Catharine, suddenly rising; "and as her gift I shall keep and value them, though I may never wear them."

The words were nothing in themselves, had they been spoken in a low and gentle voice, but the asperity of tone, and the gloomy fierceness of Catharine's eye whenever she addressed her aunt, irritated as much as they awed Lady John, and she frequently declared that she felt certain Catharine Dalrymple was mad.

Poor Catharine! Often as she wandered alone through the wildest and least frequented spots in the park—able to cast aside the shrouding and oppressive black mantle, and lift the deep bonnet from her aching head, she had prayed against that very madness—*hate*—she had prayed for a more Christian spirit, a more patient heart—and prayed in vain. Every day, every hour, increased the aversion she had conceived for her aunt, and every day the struggle grew fainter against this evil and absorbing feeling.

In her lost mother's lifetime, the gentle and soothing words from those loving lips had calmed and comforted her—but now, no one advised—no one consoled;—she dared not, as heretofore, confide all her thoughts to her sister, for to her at least Moorfields was a happy home; and all radiant as she was

with beauty and health, Susan sometimes found it difficult to comprehend what it was that had wounded, or grieved her sister, and would rather seek to prove that the slight was unintentional, and that Catharine had overrated the bitterness of some wounding speech, than allow that her passionate tears had any just foundation. So difficut is it for human hearts to sympathize thoroughly in a sorrow which they have not themselves experienced! Yet, when it was obvious to Susan that unkindness was meant towards her unhappy sister, she too could weep, or utter proud and violent words; and Catharine grew to hide her tears, and to seem more contented,—fearing lest she might be tempted in some wild moment to accept the repeated offers of Susan, to leave Moorfields if it was painful to her to reside there, and to live, as Lady John had hinted to her lord, with some retired family in the country.

But it was not only the conduct of Lady John towards herself which created in Catharine's heart such bitter dislike; it was the coldness of heart to all around—friends, dependents, husband, and children.

Lord John—how could she bear to warp that noble nature, to chill that kindly heart by peevish and uncourteous answers, and by all the petty thwartings which seem *nothings* to strangers, but which make all the difference of happiness or misery in a man's own house!—he that was so gentle, so generous, so willing to bear and forbear in the midst of the disappointments of his life—so dotingly fond of his children, so attached even to her whose frozen heart repelled all attachment!

"Oh!" thought Catharine, "if she knew the value of the blessings she holds so lightly; if she could but imagine for a moment what it is to thirst for love, and yet to know one never can inspire it; to feel as *I* do, that the kindest and best can only feel for me pity and sorrow; that I never can be a first object

to any one!—if for one hour we could change souls, or that she could see the workings of my miserable heart, as I sit listening to the autumn wind, and imagining to myself the time when Susan shall marry, and I shall stand alone, a blighted isolated being, looking on at ties in which I have no share—at happiness which never can be mine!—*then*—But no one can ever feel as I do;—the lost souls who gazed upward from their place of torment, and saw in the distant heaven Lazarus leaning upon Abraham's breast, they felt it all; and like me they longed, not for that unattainable heaven, but for rest, for peace, for one drop of water to quench their agony of thirst! For death! When shall *I* die? When shall my soul escape from this hideous and deformed clay, and stand in radiant brightness before its Maker's face?

"To see the value of corporal beauty! Here is a woman who loves no one but herself; who pities no one, feels for no one; who returns harsh words for kind ones, and knows how to make even benefits bitter; and yet, because of the cold, proud, undeniable perfection of her face, and the arrowy straightness of her form, she is loved by the best and kindest heart God ever moulded. Oh! beauty, now I see thy value! At home, under my dear mother's fostering care, I saw it not, I knew it not; *there* no one ground me down with bitter words, or stared at me with startled eyes; *there* I might lean my head on her bosom, and meet only looks of affection bending over me! Alas! my mother, my lost, my blessed mother, why was I reared to outlive you! Oh! to be lovely—to be loved! or to die—to die were best!"

Such were the wild yearnings in which the unhappy Catharine indulged, when her solitary rambles had led her far from the observations of strangers; and as she sat beneath her favourite tree, an old scathed and stunted oak, her hands listlessly and ungracefully drooped over her knee, or vehemently

stretched towards heaven, murmuring to herself broken ejaculations—prayers which sounded like curses, or rocking herself backwards and forwards with bitter weeping—Lady John Haslingden's assurances that she was mad would to a stranger have seemed correct; while to the weak-minded and superstitious, who might suddenly have encountered that strange figure and mournful face as they roamed through the park in the chill autumn evenings, Catharine Dalrymple might have seemed a not unapt personification of the spirit of omen celebrated in Ireland under the name of the Banshee.

Frequently, however, in these rambles, while Susan was detained to drive in the phaeton with Lady John; or forbidden to stir out of the garden, in expectation of visiters; or sent to put on her habit, in order to ride over to some neighbour's place, Catharine took with her (as if to check by his society the moody extravagances which she was conscious impaired alike her mind and body) little Frederick Haslingden. It is a curious fact that children, gifted in general with the quickest observation, are nevertheless singularly insensible to the personal defects of their familiar companions: beauty in the abstract has no power to engage either the attention or affections of a child—the ugliest face is frequently preferred to the most lovely, and that without any apparent cause in the different degree of notice or kindness shown.

The fact is, that the sense of beauty is the growth of later years. A child never admires fine scenery, nor a beautiful face; but all children have favourite nooks, and trees, and play-places; and all children have preferences among the familiar faces which surround them. Frederick Haslingden had taken a fancy to Catharine from the evening of his little sister's unlucky question, and in spite of the expressed and contemptuous wonder of the governess, and the shrinking of his companions from the object

of his interest, he steadily clung to his opinion, that "Catharine was the most loveable person he ever saw, except his own dear father." And Catharine returned his preference with a passionate and vehement fondness, which she showed for no other being except her young sister. She taught him drawing, made him read and recite to her, and, in their wanderings together through the ferny and unfrequented paths of the park, stored his young mind with information, for which the loneliness of her life had early given her a taste.

After the arrival of the shooting party mentioned by Lady John, these ramblings became longer and more frequent, and Susan and Catharine only met in the solitude of their own apartment; in obedience alike to the disinclination of the latter to appear, and to the command of her proud aunt.

One day Susan returned from her ride, and opened the door of their sitting-room with an eager and hurried hand.

"Who *do* you think is come?" said she, her eyes sparkling, and her cheek flushing crimson as she spoke.

"Some very agreeable person, if I may judge by your countenance, dearest."

"Guess."

"Henry Egerton."

"Ah! you saw him!"

"No, indeed," said Catharine, laughing, "but I see it in your bright face; I see 'Henry is come' written there in illuminated letters. Ah! when we last saw him!"

And the thoughts of the orphaned girls reverted sadly to the melancholy events of the preceding summer. But Susan was too joyful at the arrival of her lover to dwell long on mournful subjects; it was such a sudden, unexpected happiness! Lady John had never mentioned him (she did not consider so penniless a man *mentionable*), and Susan had merely

seen a travelling carriage, in which there were two young men, drive up to the portico, and from that travelling carriage a graceful and well-remembered figure jumped hastily out, exclaiming, with great satisfaction, "In time for dinner, by Jove!"

That day her toilet was watched with more sedulous care than was usual, even with her sister; and the accomplished Thérèse (who had received Lady John's command to attire Miss Dalrymple with the utmost attention) brought with her a scarlet Camelia japonica, which she placed in Susan's hair.

As the polished green leaf and rich red bud touched her glowing cheek, and the lifted curls were allowed to fall over the opened flower, Susan could not help inwardly congratulating herself that a caprice of her aunt's should have made her look even better than usual this particular day, when she was about to meet Henry Egerton. Her heart beat as she knocked at Lady John's dressing-room door, and she started when the usual "Come in" answered her signal as if she had received some extraordinary intelligence. Lady John Haslingden pulled one curl a little lower, settled a plait in the corsage of her black crape dress, and then, in a grave and satisfied tone, observed,—

"You look remarkably well; we have two new arrivals, Lord Glenalton and Mr. Egerton. Lord Glenalton is one of the most charming persons I know—belongs to one of the most noble families in Scotland, and is in every respect a most desirable match. We will now go down."

"Well," thought Susan, "I am glad I know *why* Thérèse put a camelia in my hair, and I do not mind Lord Glenalton thinking me pretty if Henry Egerton thinks the same."

In the dusk *before-dinner* light, Susan Dalrymple could only see that Lord Glenalton was tall and apparently shy. Henry Egerton's manner struck her as cold and altered, and the glow faded from her cheek as she admitted the possibility, that in three

months or more, during which she had neither seen nor corresponded with him, he might—he *might* have been occupied with others. But one glance, caught from the farther end of the table, as she sat down by Lord Glenalton, one sad fond glance from those dark blue eyes reassured her.

"He loves me as well as ever," thought she.

Poor Susan! as Henry Egerton bent over his soup-plate, *he* thought to himself—"Mrs. Wilmot would be devilish angry if she knew I was here; but what could I do? Glenalton *would* bring me, and there is capital snipe-shooting, and every excuse for the temptation. I'll write to-morrow, and tell her myself; it's always better to brave those sort of things; it will be a week or ten days before I get an answer, and then if she makes a point of it, I can leave this."

CHAPTER VI.

IRRESOLUTE and vain, Henry Egerton did not fulfil his intention of writing to his friend's wife. Lord Glenalton fell desperately in love with Miss Dalrymple, and put off from day to day all thought of departure from Moorfields. Lord John pressed him warmly, kindly, to stay; Lady John seconded her husband with all the cordiality of which her nature was capable: rides were arranged, shooting-parties planned, excursions of pleasure entered into, solely with a view to Lord Glenalton's convenience; and Henry Egerton found himself, in common with most of the other guests who shared Lord John's hospitality, a cipher in comparison with the young Scotch nobleman; and Susan, though she preserved the sweet and cheerful composure of her manner, certainly did not discourage his attentions. She was piqued at the apparent change in her former lover, and perhaps not unwilling to prove to him that she had as much the power to charm as ever, though that power might be exerted over a different object. Henry Egerton's love awoke from its chilled slumber; he had deemed himself secure of her heart, his fancy had been fascinated in her absence by another; but the prospect of Susan's becoming attached to or marrying any one but himself startled him. He ventured upon some reproaches, some allusions to old days;—they were received with embarrassment, with agitation, with gleams of repressed tenderness. He persisted, and Susan murmured some counter reproach, some accusal of forgetfulness, which gave him (what he wished) an opportunity of explaining, defending, and passionately protesting his own con-

stancy. He alluded mournfully to his want of fortune, jealously to the favoured circumstances of his rival, and, just as Susan waited with trembling and nervous expectation for his proposal in form, he impressively murmured the following sentence:—"All I dare ask, all I dare expect, is, that when the friends under whose protection you are desire to marry you to some rich man—some one who can give you the comforts and luxuries which you ought to have—some one who is not cursed with debts and embarrassments to prevent his being able to realize the desire of his soul—all I ask is, *write to me;* do not let the blow come suddenly upon me from the tongues of strangers—write to me, let me be where I will, and do not give *your* answer till you get *mine.* Perhaps—*perhaps*—" and here he paused.

Susan felt that it would not be seemly to say to her young lover, "Talk not of riches, or of marrying another—I will share poverty willingly, cheerfully with you; I am ready to follow you through the wide world contentedly; I am ready to marry you to-morrow, if you desire it." She kept silence, though she longed to explain to him that she had been accustomed all her life to economy, nay, to poverty; and that she desired no luxury or comfort beyond his every-day society: she looked up in his face with tearful eyes, and when he murmured "Will you not promise me?" she put her hand into his, and faltered out her acquiescence.

Mr. Egerton watched her countenance for a moment, and then with a sigh he added—"Should any unforeseen accident oblige us to see less of each other—should your friends discourage my attention to you—or others attempt to prejudice you against me, your promise will still hold good? Let me think I may trust to his hope, and I shall feel less unhappy."

"I promise you solemnly, that, under whatever circumstances such an event takes place, I will write

to you immediately;—though you need not fear, dear Henry, I never, never could be persuaded to marry, where my heart did not love! and—we cannot love *twice*."

Her voice faltered over the last words, and she shrank as Henry Egerton whispered—"Give me a lock of your hair, as a pledge that you will keep your word."

"And you?" said she, without lifting her eyes.

"And I, dearest and loveliest, if you will cut it."

So saying, he bowed his head forward, and Susan, with a hand that trembled at its own boldness, hastily severed one of the thick curls which clustered round his temples; still more nervously selected one of her own, and turning red and pale by turns, presented it to her lover. Little did she dream in that day, as she stood abashed and faint in the presence of Henry Egerton, ashamed that even the red beams of the setting sun should witness their love-scene, how calm, and cold, and self-composed she should hereafter go through similar trials; how bold and proud the eyes would grow that then dared not look from under their lashes.

Then—then she still wanted two months of her seventeenth birthday!

Meanwhile, though Lord Glenalton was apparently much struck with Susan, he did not propose; her manner to him was too cold to encourage so very shy a man to take so desperate a step, and while Lady John fumed and fidgeted about the success of her plan—while Catharine's heart was filled with a gnawing anxiety she dared not express, that her sister might marry and relieve her from her present irksome life—while Henry Egerton struggled with the contending feelings of jealousy, vanity, and love, Susan alone remained tranquil and composed; she had made up her mind as to the course she should pursue, she had determined to give no encouragement to her admirer; and if he proposed in spite of this

determination, to refuse him. It was a proud moment for Henry Egerton, when happening to mimic the Scotch accent in which Lord Glenalton spoke, Susan's eyes met his, while her amused smile, and the deepening colour in her cheek, silently betrayed her sympathy in *his* feelings, and her carelessness of all besides.

An accident which occurred shortly after the love-scene between Miss Dalrymple and Mr. Egerton, broke up the party in some measure, and threw a damp over the gayety of Moorfields. The gun belonging to one of the keepers burst; and, while the man himself escaped with a slight contusion, Lord John, who was standing within a few paces, received part of the charge in his face, by which his eyes were so much injured that the doctors feared for his sight.

It was during the dull confinement which followed this accident that the utter coldness of Lady John was more apparent. It was not that she was inattentive; on the contrary, she did all that could in decency be expected of an irreproachable wife—duly sat with him half an hour in the morning after breakfast, before dinner, and in the evening before she retired to rest. But she *thought* of nothing to distract and amuse him; the inspiration of love was wanting.

One day, when little Frederick Haslingden was seated near his father with an open book on his knee, he said, "Father, I cannot read well enough to amuse you—and yet I do so wish that your illness could be made less dull to you—it must be very wretched to sit doing nothing all day long, with that green shade over your eyes."

"It *is* very dull, my boy, but it might have been worse—so let me be thankful."

"But, father, if you would let Catharine Dalrymple read to you—you have no idea how much more pleasantly the time would pass; she has such a pretty way of reading—she can read all Shakspeare's plays with a different voice. Oh! father, if you could hear

her read King Lear, in the storm! May I ask her? I am sure she will come."

"If she is not busy, you may ask her to come."

The description given by little Frederick was not at all exaggerated; and the tedium of remaining in a dark room, to a man accustomed to out-door exercises and amusements, was lightened by listening to the pleasant voice of poor Catharine, who had not felt so happy for a long time, as when she was thus enabled to make some slight return for the constant kindness she had received from her guardian. Every day she remained reading or talking to him for hours together, and his praise or arguments were listened to with deep and steady attention. Little Frederick was the only break to their *tête-à-tête*, and he was excessively proud of his own wisdom which had hit upon so successful a plan for entertaining his father, and considered Catharine a marvel of talent and amiability: the result was, that Catharine was no longer so shrinking and reserved as she had been; she amused, and *felt* that she amused, and the consciousness gave her more buoyancy of spirits than she had yet shown.

"Catharine," said Lord John, one afternoon, "in a few days I shall give you no further trouble. The physician says I may soon think of reading to myself." A choked sigh was Catharine's only answer, and her guardian continued: "You have exerted yourself so cheerfully, so willingly, to entertain me; you have seemed to think so little of sacrificing all your time to me, that it has taught me to value you as you deserve. I shall not forget these tedious days."

As he spoke the last words he took her hand; Catharine bent her head, and murmuring, "It has been a pleasure to me to be of use to you," she departed.

As the door closed, Lord John leaned back in his library chair, and said, musingly, "A bad temper!

no, she certainly has not a bad temper; that is one of Lady John's prejudices; she is a clever girl, too, but a little cold and stern at times." And satisfied with the correctness of his own judgment, in opposition to that of his wife's, he relapsed into a revery respecting the intentions of young Glenalton towards Susan Dalrymple.

These intentions were made more manifest during the succeeding spring which was spent in London. Lord Glenalton haunted Susan like a shadow when she was at a ball or party, and called almost every day at their house in Grosvenor-street. Morning and evening she was certain to see him; and if her heart sometimes ached with the thought that Henry Egerton did not follow so good an example; if her startled eye sometimes filled with tears when she welcomed him, after vainly expecting another; if her attention wandered while he was conversing with her, and her restless glances sought for *one* amid the moving crowd who appeared to have ceased to think of her; if, in short, her heart and soul were devoted to dreams of Henry Egerton, Lord Glenalton saw it not, knew it not. He loved so passionately that he could not believe he was not loved in return; he felt as if his devotion might *earn* a heart so young and pure, and he awaited some opportunity of expressing those hopes with feverish impatience. Meanwhile Susan's manner was not as she had intended, steadily cold and courteous; the inequality of her feelings was displayed in the moods in which she received her suitor. Sometimes, when the torture of witnessing Henry Egerton's carelessness, or his attentions to Mrs. Wilmot, had stung her to the quick, she involuntarily uttered some sarcasm at the inconstancy of his sex, some distrustful and complaining speech, which called forth the warmest and most enthusiastic defence from Glenalton, and forced her to listen to protestations she had brought upon herself by those vague and general remarks. At other moments, when languid

and dispirited, she thought over the happy past and doubtful future; when she imagined to herself a life in which Henry Egerton had no share, and felt desolate and forsaken, her thoughts would revert to her new lover, and she would say, "Yes, even as I love Henry, so he loves me! Life is all a blank to him, if I am not with him—and the world is dark to me if Henry be not by my side. Oh! Glenalton, I know your misery, for it is mine. *I* too doubt, and fear, and strive; *I* too watch jealously and anxiously; I too madden over the thought that the day *may* come when mutual explanation will leave us strangers to each other!" And Susan's heart softened as she thought of the unhappiness she inflicted, and involuntarily her manner was kinder and more soothing at such times, or her gentle coaxing eyes fixed on him with an appealing expression, as if she at once besought his pardon and his sympathy. And fascinating as Glenalton thought Lady John Haslingden's niece at all times, she seemed yet more irresistible in these grieved and softened moments. He thought he read in her eyes that she loved him, and in the pained and faltering tone of her voice only the shyness and embarrassment natural to her sex and age.

Henry Egerton meanwhile continued the favourite adorer of Mrs. Wilmot. She had taken more pains to rivet the chains of her captive since he had appeared likely to escape, and by alternately arousing his jealousy, and persuading him that he was the only person for whom she had ever felt a *real passion*, she contrived to keep a stronger hold over him than any woman had yet boasted.

This passion (which, on both sides, began and ended in vanity) was not likely to be very permanent. Perhaps both the principal parties concerned looked back upon it in after years with a smile, at the transient importance it assumed; but to Susan Dalrymple it was every thing. Henry Egerton's unworthiness, his fickle and vain character, his incapa-

bility of feeling deep and strong emotions, his selfish regard for his own comforts—all these and other proofs of the folly of an attachment conceived at the age of seventeen, for one of whom she knew so little, might gradually break upon her reason; but meanwhile she *had loved;* she had wasted her heart's first and purest emotions upon an ideal object; she had dreamed her woman's dream, and struggled in vain to awake from it. She said not to herself, "I have judged foolishly, let me recall my heart and choose again;" but she said, "If *he* is false, who shall be true? If he, the beautiful, the noble, the beloved, has forsaken me, to whom shall I dare to cling? If *this* bright and glorious dream of my youth is to end in disappointment, why should I hope again?"

The first chilling and withering sensation of distrust crept into Susan's heart, and she felt older by years than the preceding spring. It was, in fact, but a single event in a long life, but it seemed to her that the fate of her whole life turned upon it, and she was not entirely mistaken. It is such events as these, coming as they do in early life to pass away unnoticed, which mould and form a woman's disposition; and in proportion to the degree of principle and right feeling, the depth or volatility of her disposition, the warmth or coldness of her affections, time enables her to *steady*, and form a reasonable and virtuous choice—or sends the vain coquet, the bold profligate, and the wily intriguant, to disturb and infest society. But whether the result be good or evil, it is for the time a sore trial; and the heart which stands the shock, which neither chills nor maddens, but still preserves its kindliness of feeling after the desolate moment of "being jilted" has passed away, is worth winning and keeping; for reason and affection must both have had more power over that heart than passion or vanity.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot went to Paris; and they

had not been gone a fortnight before Henry Egerton likewise took his departure. Before he left London, however, he came to the Haslingdens to bid Susan farewell. Their conversation was constrained and dull. *She* thought of the evident change in his feelings towards her, and of the accusation of the world which pronounced him the lover of his friend's wife; and *he*, on his part, stifled back the mechanical phrases of regret at leaving her, for conscience told him it was a mockery, since, if he desired to stay, who obliged him to depart? At length he rose, and, as he took her hand, he murmured,—

"You will remember your *promise*, should any thing happen in my absence!"

Susan did not reply; she started, and withdrew her hand, and then offered it again, while tears trembled in her eyes. Lady John Haslingden was standing with her back turned to the young lovers; but a tell-tale mirror revealed the start, the sudden blush, the gaze of tearful and despairing fondness with which Susan placed her hand in his.

The door had no sooner closed on Henry Egerton, than, approaching her niece, she said,—

"My love, what did Mr. Egerton say when he took leave? Pray don't hesitate. I stand in your poor dear mother's place. I wish to know what he said."

"He reminded me of a promise," replied Susan, her cheek crimsoning at the remembrance.

"What promise?"

"A promise I made to tell him if my friends wished me to marry any one else."

"Any one else! why, good heavens! you don't think of marrying Mr. Egerton! You don't think he would marry *you!*"

There was a pause; after which Lady John added, with cold asperity,—

"You must have a great deal of vanity, my love, and be very blind into the bargain, not to see that

Mr. Egerton is Mrs. Wilmot's lover; and it is probably a great amusement to that lady to see what a fool he makes of you."

"Mr. Egerton liked me before he knew Mrs. Wilmot," said Susan, hesitatingly.

"Indeed! what a conquest! a young man without a farthing, who comes to see you when he can spare a moment from other occupations. Really, Susan, I thought you had more sense. However, of course, you will take your own way, and wait till Mr. Egerton gives you leave to marry."

So saying, Lady John Haslingden glided with a stately step from the drawing-room; not, if it must be confessed, in the very best of humours, and certainly never less disposed to allow any one their own way. She had determined that her beautiful niece should be Lady Glenalton, and still intended it, in spite of the confession just made. Though cold and unfeeling, she was not false; in the allusions she made to Mrs. Wilmot, she said no more than she believed, and would have been quite as much surprised as that lady herself, had Henry Egerton proposed for Susan Dalrymple. But inheriting, as she did, all her father's passion for "great connections," she inwardly resolved that her sister's child should not follow the example of her unhappy mother, and that, instead of marrying entirely according to her own fancy, she should marry for the credit and support of the whole family. That Susan should marry *soon*, was also a principal desire with her aunt. Lady John felt that she could not send away Catharine unless she parted with both sisters; and her dislike to the deformed girl had increased in bitterness from the unaccountable circumstance of old Mr. Brooksby taking a fancy to her. Lord John had praised her abilities and willingness to be of use; and though Catharine herself was little gratified by the old man's assurance, that "*he* didn't care if she was as crooked as a ram's horn, as long as she amused

him," and that he would "leave her money enough to make people think her as straight as an arrow;" it was sufficient to rouse the fiend of jealousy in the mind of the grasping and mercenary Lady John. A circumstance which took place about a week after the departure of Henry Egerton, caused her to betray before others her hitherto controlled dislike, and made a further residence with her aunt as impossible to the outraged Catharine as it had long been unbearable.

While Susan and Lady John sat in the drawing-room receiving such idlers as chose to drop in of a morning, Frederick Haslingden used to coax Catharine to spend an hour or two in what he called *his* study; and as soon as his daily tutor had departed, she was sure to hear that eager footstep on the stair leading to her room, and see his curly head popped in at the door of her room, with a mute petitioning smile, which she was never too busy to notice or too sad to return. On the day in question she had been contriving a miniature theatre for her little favourite, and some part of the materials being wanting, she left her portfolio on the table and returned to her own room to seek for the missing article.

During her absence, Lord John came in with Mr. Brooksby, and, patting his son's head, said,—

"I am come to propose a great pleasure to you, Frederick. Your grandpapa has bought you a beautiful pony, and as it is so fine a day, we will take you to ride in the park."

For a moment the boy sat breathless with surprise and delight, then starting up, he kissed the old man's hands with the most extravagant joy. By this hurried movement the portfolio was thrown from the table, and its contents scattered on the floor.

"Oh, me!—I have knocked down poor Kate's portfolio," said he, "with all her pretty cuttings, and all her scraps, and bits of poetry. She is making me a theatre, with actors and actresses, all of card; oh,

dear! oh, dear! King Lear's nice white floss-silk beard has come off! Do, papa, help me to pick these papers up."

His father smiled at the distressed countenance of the kneeling boy, and, collecting the papers, shook them even in the portfolio; as he did so, some lines caught his eye, which struck him.

"These are very good lines," said he; "I wonder are they Catharine's, or are they copied."

"I dare say they are poor Kate's," said Frederick. "I know she makes verses, because she made me some on my dog Sancho, who was drowned under the ice last winter."

"Listen, Mr. Brooksby," said Lord John, "and tell me whether you do not agree with me."

LINES ON A PICTURE AT MOORFIELDS PARK.

Lo! how the painter's skill can make us dream!
Gazing upon those blue and misty hills,
The dim perspective of that shining lake,
The bending branches of those birchen trees,
And the rich tinting of the wood beyond,
A spell of magic falls upon my heart!
I fancy that I feel the wild north wind
Come with its welcome freshness to my cheek;
Those yielding branches give me passage free;
Th' elastic heather bends beneath my tread;
And in my ear the rippling water's lull
Sounds as it used in old remember'd days!
Let me lie down and rest. Here is a bank
Where the eternal sunshine settles ever,
Thirstily to drink up the morning dew;
Yet o'er its balmy warmth the fleeting spray
Comes like a snow-shower from that hollow space
Where the bright waterfall, with sudden rush,
Leaves the hard bosom of the rugged rock—
Struggling escapes—and hush'd to peace at last,
Winds silently along the shelter'd vale.
Oh! with such glory evermore before us,
Does it not seem as if contentedly
We might remain amid sweet sounds and sights,
And dream away our fond and harmless lives?
Yet Nature's beauty, its eternal rest,
Its certain springs, that cheat not hoping hearts,

But bring fresh welcome each successive year!
All this contents us not, we must have more—
We must have human love! The changeful hope,
The deep despair of passion we must have,
Or Nature yet seems barren to our eyes.
Ev'n I (though what have *I* to do with love?)
Stand with a feverish and an aching heart,
Vaguely desiring; feeling pleasant paths,
And flowers, and woods, and mellow sunset hours,
And the low voice of winds, and murmuring sound
Of hidden brooklet gurgling on its way—
All that seems fullest of delight is blank
To one who roams with uncompanion'd steps.
Oh! Thou from whose creative hand man sprung,
Make what is given sufficient to our hearts!
Teach us contentedly to live, and deem
Invention's power to skim the liquid wave—
To track the course of the eternal stars—
And earth's permitted melodies—enough!
In vain! the prayer is vain! That thirst returns—
That first deep quenchless thirst—companionship—
Which smote sad Adam in *thy* garden bowers,
Lost Eden, and made Paradise imperfect!
We murmur as he murmur'd—mourn like him—
And, even as *he* did in those halcyon days,
Welcome with ignorantly eager hearts,
A strong temptation—and a bitter curse!

"Ah! papa," said Frederick Haslingden, impatiently, "but those are not near so pretty as some shorter ones which are here: look, these are the lines—'Alone upon the Sunny Hill.' Do read them, grandpapa."

"My dear child, I never can make out what people are at, when they write poetry, or why they can't say it in prose; but if you like to read them out, and they are really short, you may."

Frederick looked discouraged, but he obeyed.

From watching eyes I wander out
  Without an aim or end,
And towards the old accustom'd spot
  My way I sadly bend;
And still, as through the fading wood
  My weary footsteps roam,
I pause—I turn—and fondly gaze
  Towards *thy* distant home!

At length I rest, and gaze my fill—
Alone upon the sunny hill!

I read the page that thou hast read—
I walk where thou hast been—
I hide my head with broken speech,
And stifled sighs between;
I murmur to myself kind words,
Forgotten long by thee,
And mimic even the careless tone
Which utter'd them to me—
And then I sink, and weep my fill—
Alone upon the sunny hill!

Forgive me! *I* can find no heart
Upon this desert earth
Whose earnest welcome claims my love;
A curse was on my birth!—
Therefore I dream my life away
In gazing on thy face,
And deep the pleasure so to watch
Its frank and glowing grace;
I close my eyes, and see thee still—
Alone upon the sunny hill!

I know the startled glance is pain'd
Which meets my twisted form,
I've seen the stranger shrink away,
And shook with passion's storm—
I know that I must live alone
The years that I *must* live—
Forgive me, then! my dreams of *thee*
Are all that life can give—
A vague wild hope, my heart to fill—
Alone upon the sunny hill!

Just as the stanza was concluded, Catharine entered the room: she turned deadly pale, and fixed her eyes on the paper in Lord John's hand, but she did not speak, nor did she answer when he said, with a kind smile, "You do not mind your careful guardian having overlooked your compositions? I assure you, *I* admire the talent for poetry, though I cannot say as much for Mr. Brooksby. But you exaggerate your distresses—you do, indeed, my dear girl; you exaggerate your defects; it is not—" and here he hesitated—"it is not a

sane and wholesome state of mind, which tempts you to think only on that one subject; God has blessed you with a clear understanding and a kind heart—these last longer than youth and beauty."

"And, Lord love you," interrupted old Mr. Brooksby, "if all that pining is because you think the men won't fancy you because of your figure, I'll undertake to say that you shall have as good a choice of husbands as even Susan, with all her pretty waxen looks. I'll make you rich; and then—hey for a husband! Lord love you, I've seen girls twice as ugly as you married, and never found out that they were a bit worse-looking than their neighbours."

Lady John Haslingden had entered just as this delicate consolation was offered, and snatching the paper which Catharine mechanically crushed in her hand during her grandfather's speech, she said sharply, "I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself—such disgusting forwardness—and I *do* wonder my father can encourage you."

"Adelaide, my love, there is nothing to scold about," said Lord John, in a severe tone, "and if there were, it should be excused; for it was by accident that this paper fell into my hands; we had no business to read the verses, had we Kate?" As he spoke he patted her coaxingly on the shoulder; and Lady John, incensed beyond bounds, exclaimed, "Oh! of course, Catharine is to be excused; she carries her excuse with her; crooked people are always more vicious than others."

Hardly had the sentence passed her lips, than she repented it; but it was too late. With fierce and sudden vehemence Catharine Dalrymple sprang forward, and grasping her arm with breathless passion, murmured hoarsely, "Are you not afraid of God's curse? do you never dream that he may twist and turn *your* child into a thing like me? Take care, for the eye of Heaven looks down on you, and my mother reproaches you from her grave!"

"Take her away! she is mad!" shrieked Lady John, as she disengaged her arm; and in a grieved and faltering voice Lord John said, "Kate, compose yourself; go to your room, and Frederick will call your sister."

Catharine obeyed; she ascended the stairs, reached her own room, and fell back in her chair in a state of stupid insensibility.

CHAPTER VII.

" Ah perché quando appresi
A sospirar d'amore,
Un altro ardor m'accesi
Non sospirai per té ?"

When Catharine Dalrymple awoke from her swoon, her head rested on the bosom of her young sister, whose dark loving eyes were fixed anxiously on her face. An hysterical burst of passion succeeded her faintness, and she expressed in that hour of agony all the pent-up feelings of misery and loathing which she had so long concealed.

"No!" said she, "it is over now, it is over; the long weary day, and the wakeful night—the remembered insult and suppressed sneer—all is over! I will depart; I will creep into some obscure corner of the earth, where only my bare subsistence need be cared for, and there daily I will pray to God for death!"

Susan had heard from little Frederick enough to enable her to guess her sister's feelings. She spoke a few soothing words; wept with her; entreated her to bear for a little longer the discomfort of her position; and as Catharine sobbed out the words, "Ah! if you had a home, I need not seek pity from strangers," she pressed her hand, and said, in a low resolved tone, "I *will* have a home, my dear, dearest Kate, where you shall be loved and comforted, not outraged and insulted as you have been here."

That evening Glenalton proposed. Susan's manner, nervous and shaken by the sadness of the morning, was softer towards him than he had ever known it; and when, gazing on her heavy eyes and pale cheek, he besought her to tell him what had grieved her, and she replied simply, "My sister Kate is very unhappy here," a slight and faltering emphasis on the word *here* struck

to his heart, and he eagerly and fervently answered, "It is in *your* power to make her destiny happier—and *mine*."

Susan could not affect to misunderstand him, but she shrank mournfully away; and as he poured forth the kindly and generous feelings of his nature in plans for the comfort and welfare of both—as he lightly touched on his advantages of birth and fortune, as means by which he was enabled to serve them more effectually—as he drew a picture of their future home, and tenderly alluded to the scorned and harshly-treated Catharine as the principal object of all his plans and all his arrangements—Susan leaned her aching head against the gilded cornice which touched the sofa, and thought, bitterly,—

"Why are these words from *his* lips? Where is Henry Egerton, *my* Henry, with whom I thought to pass my life? What are riches to me? what is rank? I want no title; I wish for no luxuries; let me be poor as my mother was, but, like her, let me marry one I love. Oh! Henry, Henry!" and as she murmured to herself that cherished name she convulsively pressed the hand which had taken hers.

She started, as Glenalton, with a glowing smile, kissed the hand he held, and murmured, "Then I am not indifferent to you?"—she started, and her dream vanished! Coldly and sadly she turned to her lover and said, "Give me a fortnight from to-morrow, and do not call during that time; I will then give you my answer; and oh! believe that I feel your kindness about poor Catharine more than words can tell."

The tears rushed to her eyes, and waving Lord Glenalton away, she sought her own room. There a thousand conflicting emotions swelled in her heart, and she wept till even her sorrow seemed wearied out.

"After all," thought she, "why should I fix my destiny irrevocably? Why should I answer Glenalton, or write to Henry? I am but seventeen, and Catharine is only a year older; what are two or three years

out of so young a life? I might wait: Henry Egerton has been wiled away from me by a vain and wicked woman; but he loved me—I am sure he loved me! He would return to me, perhaps—perhaps! Alas! what right have I to expect it? He may indeed change again; he may leave Mrs. Wilmot—but not for me. The broken flower returns not to its stem, though others as bright spring in its place: he is lost to *me* for ever!" Then as her thoughts wandered back through all the scenes of their attachment, her heart again grew confident; it seemed to her that a feverish fancy had for a while misled Henry Egerton, but that the thought of losing her for ever would break the spell under which he laboured, and that a few lines would restore him to her. The eagerness of youth, which prompts us to any measure that can avoid the hopelessness of inactivity, urged her to fulfil her promise, and write the intelligence of Glenalton's proposal. The forwardness, the uselessness of such a step, were nothing in her eyes; she feared not his ridicule and scorn, for her heart was too young and fresh in its feelings to calculate upon *more* than the inconstancy of the object of her love. *That* had bitterness enough in it for *her*. The thought that, however much he might pity and regret her, he would be unable to free his heart from its bondage to another—*that* was all the risk she contemplated, and that risk she resolved to run.

Catharine's room opened into her sister's, and Susan took the lamp in her hand to bid her good-night before she began her task. She softly opened the door and approached the bed—Catharine slept; she did not wake her, for what could she confide? Not that with heart and soul pledged to one man, she contemplated the possibility of marrying another in order to secure rest and peace to her unhappy sister; not that she was about to write a last appeal to him she loved, and by the answer decide Glenalton's fate. No! even as Catharine had concealed from *her* all the misery of her residence with Lady John Haslingden, so she

locked up in her own bosom the painful struggles and rash resolves of that hour. She held the lamp high above her head, and gazed on the pale features of the sleeping girl; the dark lids were heavy and swollen with weeping—the grieved and harsh lines round her mouth were harsher and more sullen than usual—the brow was contracted—the lips compressed; it was the countenance of one whom fatigue had forced to sleep while under the dominion of racking and bitter feelings; and Susan's heart ached as she gazed. The light, faint as it was, apparently disturbed Catharine, for she moved and turned, and tossing her arm above her head, murmured, in a tone of passionate despair, "No, no! do not comfort me—only let me die!" Then, weeping even in her sleep, she faltered out, "Mother! Mother! I have had no peace—no rest, since you left me!"

Susan stole away to her own room.

"Oh! come what may to myself," thought she, as she leaned her weeping head on her hand, "Catharine will be happier, and I shall at least know to what I have to trust. Hail! certainty, blessed certainty! the feverishness of hope and fear will be over when I have written and received his answer."

Susan wrote;—a wild and passionate appeal—a prayer not to be forsaken—a vow never to forget; she read it, and it seemed to her unmaidenly so to address her lover; she wrote again:—

"I fulfil my promise. The wishes of my aunt are realized; Lord Glenalton has proposed, and I am to answer him this day fortnight. If your answer be '*farewell*,' write nothing but that word, and return in your letter the curl I gave you.

"Susan D."

After this had been despatched she felt calmer, happier; it was something gained to have attempted to reverse her destiny. To irresolute persons there is an intense satisfaction in having at length made up

their minds to act; and after her inward struggles, her agony of indecision, her weary and feverish hours of self-communion, a deep and satisfied feeling of repose stole over her mind, and for a while she awaited tranquilly the effect of her information on Henry Egerton. But in proportion as delay wearies and hope weakens, suspense becomes intolerable. Day after day fleeted by and no answer arrived to that letter which it had cost so many struggles to write, till at length Susan's heart recoiled with the bitter conviction that she had unnecessarily humbled herself by an appeal which could only be irksome to one who loved no more.

Who has not known the feverish agony of expectation? Who is there whose soul has not alternately maddened and grown chilly sick with unconfessed doubts and fears? Who is there who has not, at one time or other of their lives, sat in a busy circle of their fellow-creatures and understood no more of what went on around them than if it were the gurgling voice of waters? Who is there who cannot recall moments passed amid mirth and music, when the strong fever came upon them to clasp their hands with a despairing prayer, or suddenly to bow down their heads and weep bitterly, who have yet checked themselves in the vague consciousness that there *was* mirth and music around them, in which they were supposed to share? Oh! who shall read the agony of those hours when our common acquaintances say of us, "I think he seemed a little dull and depressed to-night." Who shall tell what lies hid under the mask of the world's cold smile!

And Susan could not withdraw herself from the gayeties proposed or rather insisted upon by her aunt. The opera, which was then the great fashionable amusement of London, was still to be attended—the promenade still duly walked through; and any expressed wish to remain at home was invariably answered by, "My dear, the moment you are *engaged*

I shall be the last person in the world to wish you to go out—that will all be understood and settled between you and Lord Glenalton, should you accept him; but till then I must request matters may go on as usual."

Day after day glided by, and still no answer came from Henry Egerton; Susan's anxiety became torture; the hour when the post came in seemed the only hour of the day in which she lived or was conscious of existence; unable to read, to write, to think, she sat in a state of languid abstraction, giving unmeaning answers to those who addressed her, and starting at every unusual sound. She retired to her room, not to sleep, but to watch for the morning, and to count the hours that must elapse before the next delivery of foreign letters; or if, worn out and exhausted by her sorrow, she fell into a slumber, she would start from a dream that the post-hour had gone by—sob herself wide awake—and passionately thank Heaven that it *was* a dream—that there were still hours to spend in anxiety and expectation—still room to hope that she was not forgotten and abandoned by her heart's idol.

At length the day arrived on which she had promised to inform Glenalton of her decision. The letters from abroad came in on this day, but Susan's heart beat less wildly than usual; she gazed without tears in the mirror, while Thérèse rounded every burnished ringlet on her skilful fingers; and her step, which had been so hurried during the mornings of anxiety she had passed, was slow and composed as she glided in and took her seat at the breakfast-table. Catharine had been taken by Mr. Brooksby to Tunbridge Wells after the day of Lady John's quarrel with her, and Susan felt more able to command her feelings in the absence of the only object who felt sympathy with her.

Lord John was reading the newspaper, but as Susan entered and stood by his side for a moment, murmuring her sweet "good-morrow," he laid the paper down, and, kissing her forehead, said, "Here is a letter for you, a Paris letter."

Lady John Haslingden turned sharply round, and looked with a cold scrutinizing eye at the epistle which was put into her niece's trembling hand; the latter did not speak—she remained standing by her guardian, pale and motionless, and just as Lord John looked up with some surprise, her eyes closed, she grasped suddenly the chair next her, and twisting round, fell in a dead faint on the floor. While Lord John rang the bell hastily to summon attendance, Lady John, who had stooped to raise her niece, minutely examined the letter which fell from her powerless hand; she looked at the post-mark, the seal, the direction, and something like a sneering smile quivered for a moment round her lips as she laid it on the table with the satisfied air of one who has solved a mystery. As Susan slowly recovered, she said, coaxingly, "You are ill to-day, my love, or something has vexed you—what is it?"

The tone of Susan's answer rang even in *her* ear for many a day; there was something in it so low and gentle, yet so broken-hearted, "No, dear aunt, nothing can ever vex me again!"

The letter which Susan had received was not from Henry Egerton; it was in the handwriting of Caroline Clinton, a young married woman who had been a favourite with both the Dalrymples when they were in Italy previous to their father's death. Her story was peculiar; she was an only child, and possessed of some property; had married, "for love," a Mr. Clinton, who, having paid his debts with the greater part of her fortune, and ill used her exceedingly, had separated from her, and was living, no one knew where or how, on the Continent. The letter purported to be written from anxiety to obtain some MS. music which the writer used to sing with Susan Dalrymple; but the pith was contained in an exceeding long P.S., which was thus worded:—"As we are such old friends, I am sure you will write me word of the truth or falsehood of a report I hear, that you are to be married to Lord Glenalton. He is my cousin; so I have a double

interest in knowing. There is a very handsome Mr. Egerton here, who, people say, was also your admirer before he became enamoured of 'la jolie coquette,' as they call Mrs. Wilmot. All the women in Paris are in love with him (of course), but he keeps pretty steady to his English passion. I wonder now that you English *can*, that you do not all come to Paris—we have quite done hating each other for the present."

After the first deadly sickness of disappointment, Susan became more cheerful and composed, to outward appearance. She excused herself to her conscience, in resolving to marry Glenalton, by the reflection that he need never know she had had a preference for another, and that he certainly had never guessed it.

"I shall not make a less dutiful, a less attached wife, because I have thus blindly loved," thought she; "on the contrary, this shock has so sobered, so subdued me for life, that I feel I never shall have any giddiness to reproach myself with; I shall study Glenalton's will as my rule of conduct, and my life shall be spent in endeavouring to repay his attachment, for I feel that he loves me as I *loved* Henry Egerton."

When Lord Glenalton heard the proud unfaltering determined tone in which Susan pronounced the promise to be his, he felt a thrill of vague disappointment; there was too little romance, too little softness in it; but when, as he passed a ring on her finger, and murmured a petition for a braid of her hair, she crimsoned and burst into tears, he felt enraptured and delighted. Mistaken man! in the cold unfaltering tone was rung the knell to past hopes, the determination to act steadily and virtuously; in the sudden burst of sorrow, all the weakness of her heart returned—the library scene at Moorfields, with its glow of evening sunshine and exchange of love-tokens. It was not Glenalton *then* who was present to her eyes, but Henry Egerton's head, with its glossy curls, bending forward under her trembling hand. Susan chased away those thoughts, and again the cold, almost harsh determination of

manner returned. Pre-occupied with painful thoughts, which she struggled to repress, her countenance lost its tenderness. Love, beneath whose influence the boldest grow shy and timid, was wanting; and a sorrowful earnestness replaced the mixture of fondness and embarrassment usually displayed on such occasions.

Susan Dalrymple burned the lock of Henry Egerton's hair, the roses she had caught when his hand flung them away with a peevish and regretful speech, and two notes in his hand writing. She threw his ring into the Serpentine, wrote to Catharine and Mr. Brooksby, and prepared to stand at the altar as Lord Glenalton's bride.

The last day passed rapidly away—the last "good-night" that was to be uttered as a dependent in the house of another fell falteringly from her lips; the last night that the sisters were to share one apartment was spent in tears and calling up the memory of old days—and as the morning broke, Susan was left alone. She watched the blue dawn spread over the summer sky, and listened to the confused chirping of the waking birds with a feeling of heaviness of heart and utter abandonment which she had never before experienced. The pearls she was to wear during the ceremony (Glenalton's last gift) lay on the toilet; and she turned from them with a shuddering sigh. Then, as her heart smote her, she knelt and prayed, and again the doubt she dared not indulge was checked by the whisper, "I shall not make a worse wife because I dread to-morrow—(the morrow! alas! it is already begun). It is natural I should dread it; we never know if we have decided rightly, or what our future fate may be. This is the most awful moment of my life, and it is the chill of the morning which makes me feel doubly sad and doubly heavy. I should have felt the same *if*—"

And again Susan clasped her hands in earnest prayer.

She fell asleep, and dreamed that Lady John was calling her, and that the post had just come in. She opened her eyes, and in the confused moments of her first waking the same sensation of gladness that it was still so early—that she had still "*her letters to come*," stole over her mind; but as she became more thoroughly roused, and saw Lady John indeed standing by her bedside, articulating cold compliments, and presenting a Brussels lace veil; when she perceived Catharine, with a sad yet satisfied countenance, seated at the foot of the bed; and Thérèse, all joy, and triumph, and animation, arranging the bridal finery—*then* she felt the reality of her day begin. She was dressed; she was congratulated; her beauty was praised; her blushes joked about; silver favours were given to the assembled guests; and real orange flowers were presented by Lord John to herself and her sister. The rich Brussels lace veil was flung over her lovely head. There was a hush—a deep awful silence—a solemn voice, and dictated responses—a ring was put on her cold hand, which shrank nervously from the fervent pressure of the bridegroom,—and Susan Dalrymple was a wife!

As she stood still listening to the renewed hum and buzz of congratulations, the gentle laughter of her six pretty bridesmaids, and the repetitions of her name from older friends, it seemed to her that it was all a dream—a strange wild oppressive dream, from which she could not wake.

And many, and many, and many a day after that one which sealed her fate, it seemed to be a dream that she was indeed a wife; and she would start from her uneasy sleep with a vague feeling of remorse and regret; or that still vaguer sensation which comes upon us after great sorrow—the consciousness that we *have* some cause for grief without the perfect memory of what it is. Then, as gradually the whole truth became present to her mind, she would close her eyes and strive to sleep again, to dream that she was free;—

sometimes the effort would succeed; wild wandering visions would give her back all the bartered liberty of her youth; the days would return when she had still the power to choose and to refuse; and she started and shrank to find how bitter was the waking which brought back the truth to her heart.

But oftener,—far, far oftener—

"Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,"

refused its peace to her weary lids, and she remained, her eyes opened wide upon the cold blank darkness, reflecting on the change that had taken place in her destiny; reproaching herself for not loving Glenalton; praying for the power to love him, good and generous as he was; tearfully resolving that never should any contradiction of his slightest whim, or most unjust caprice (if he was capable of such), give him cause to suppose he was not cherished by her; and sometimes thinking pleasantly over the improvement in Catharine's health and spirits, and her assurances of perfect and entire happiness since she came to live with them. But ever and anon, in spite of her best resolutions—in the midst of her pleasantest thoughts, a strange and startled feeling chilled her heart; in vain she answered her own thoughts with the usual soothing reply, "I shall not make the worse wife that the thought of the eternal link by which we are united oppresses me so." She felt that it *did* oppress her, and bitter was the agony with which, hiding her weeping face in her pillow, she murmured, "I have sinned—I feel that I have sinned—rashly have I acted, and deeply am I punished. Dreams comfort me in vain—I wake—I live, and I am bound;—bound for ever, and ever, and ever!"

It was a heavy and lead-like feeling.

CHAPTER VIII.

"We deceive *ourselves*, and the truth is not in us."

After their honeymoon was over, and a short visit at Moorfields had been paid, Lord and Lady Glenalton proceeded to Loch-Lyne Castle, a beautiful and romantic place in the Highlands, with a wide blue lake stretching far among the hills, of sufficient size to allow of pleasant sailing excursions, though not to attract the particular notice of travellers, or to obtain more space in the road-books and journals than its simple name required.

To strangers, indeed, the spot was little known; Lord Glenalton, though of a noble family, was by no means a rich peer, and his hereditary possessions had for many generations past been gradually diminished by purchases from the estate. Often he would point out some distant line of boundary, and say, with a sigh, to his young wife—"All that *was* ours;" and to him Loch-Lyne seemed a poor and insufficient heritage; but to Catharine and Susan it was a paradise. The very name, accidentally encountered among a list of Scottish lakes, or a guide to the Highlands, seemed redolent of beauty, and freshness, and peace; and Lady Glenalton would have been contented to remain there for ever. Such, however, was not her husband's intention. Proud and vain of his rank, touchy as to the estimation in which it was held by others, and little inclined to any of the employments which can alone make solitude a pleasure, Lord Glenalton sought the world with eagerness. He had been brought up chiefly in Scotland, and the few young Englishmen with whom he afterward became intimate, especially his friend

Henry Egerton, were particularly in the habit of laughing at the regular "Scotch laird's life," and loud in their hopes that *he* would never consent to lead it. Glenalton had a dread of being laughed at, which is not so often a proof of weakness as it is of a vain and sensitive mind, unaccustomed to mingle much with other men, or to combat the opinions of a multitude; and he became half persuaded that it was as ridiculous as it certainly was dull to spend the whole year round, and year after year (as his father and grandfather had done), at Loch-Lyne. He resolved to do as others did, and live in London all the season, making a lengthened visit to the castle during the shooting months. The vague disappointment, too, which had smote him on the day when Susan had, by accepting him, put an end at once to his courtship and anxiety, returned at times to his heart. There was no fault to be found with his bride, except that her very struggle to please and to comprehend him gave an appearance of cold effort to her manner; and that now and then she was sad and abstracted when he was gay, silent when he was in the humour to be talkative, and weary and languid when he wished her to climb a hill or ride over the moors. And though the moment Susan perceived that her mood was displeasing to him she altered it, and endeavoured to be all he could wish, there was an effort, and he *saw* there was; the reason he did *not* see, for there are few men who can persuade themselves they do not inspire attachment; and in Susan's acceptance of him, Glenalton saw only the natural result of his unwearied efforts to gain her heart. He looked for the cause of his unsatisfied feelings respecting her; and his discontent was as vague as ever. He wondered what fault of disposition, or what defect of understanding it was, which thus erected an unseen barrier between them. Alas! it is not inequality of understanding, or even incompatibility of temper, which can pre-

vent the happiness of a married couple; it is not the common and absurd dream that they "*do not suit;*"—the greatest dissimilarity of dispositions may exist, the most entire disparity of understanding, and yet those persons may live in harmony and comfort all their lives. It is the want of *love*, on either side, which prevents people *suiting*. Love thirsts for love, and involuntarily, and mechanically as it were, we feel when it is wanting, though the discovery be unconfessed even to our own hearts. The best intentions, the most willing endeavours, cannot supply its place; duty is a poor substitute, pity an insufficient reward. We want—not to be obeyed, agreed with, looked up to, and remembered,—we want to be watched and guessed, to see our smiles reflected in the face of another—to see our untold vexations shadowing their brow with anxiety—to know, when we turn to them in a crowd, that the glance of ready sympathy in our mirth or our sadness will meet our eye;—and the stupidest face that ever was lit up with a look of love is dearer to us than an angel's brow of light, if the cold brilliancy is not for *us*.

Glenalton thought his wife a good little soul, but he voted her rather dull, rather cold, and at times almost harsh; he wished to get back to show off her beauty as his own property, and to resume the uninterrupted intimacies which the all-engrossing pursuit of love-making had for a time caused him to neglect: he quitted Loch-Lyne without regret.

Susan, on the other hand, while she vainly endeavoured to guess and understand a person so different from *her* standard of perfection—while she contrasted the blunt reality of his manners, the deep-rooted feeling of family pride, and his utter want of imagination with the fanciful and romantic style of her graceful and polished Henry Egerton—while she compared the romance of the past with the reality of the present—the dreamer sighed, and *thought* that

her husband was Henry Egerton's inferior. And still she uttered the plausible lie to her own soul—"I shall not make a worse wife that I still cling to the preferences of my girlhood; on the contrary, it shall be a sort of guide to me: all that I would have done for Henry I will do for *him;* all that I would have borne for Henry I will bear for *him;* all that love taught me to feel towards Henry I will practise towards Glenalton; and we shall be happy, very happy, when we get accustomed to each other's ways. I remember my poor mother used to say, that the first year was the most difficult time for married people to agree."

And Lady Glenalton sighed for the future, which was to bring content to her heart.

CHAPTER IX.

"Safe is your secret still in Chloë's ear,
But none of Chloë's shall you ever hear."
POPE.

AT Catharine's earnest request, she was allowed to remain alone in the beautiful solitude of Loch-Lyne when Lord and Lady Glenalton took their departure for London. In that over-peopled city she could not walk or move without being subject to the gaze of strangers, and the quiet of the happy home she had at length obtained was all she desired. The garden and the young plantations—the rough deer-hound and little shaggy terriers—the sick in the hamlet, and the boat on the lake—all the great and small, animate and inanimate objects of interest, were commended to her especial care, and the sisters parted.

Susan was not long without a female companion. Glenalton walked into the drawing-room one morning with an open letter in his hand, and giving it to his young wife said, in a tone of great pity, "Read that, my dear Susan, it is from poor Carry Clinton; her husband is proved to have been dead these two years, in America, and she is left without a farthing in the world. She entreats me to obtain for her the smallest pension possible, to enable her to live in decency abroad. I do not know that such a thing is practicable—at all events, there will be a considerable delay, and I was going to propose to you—"

"I know what you would say," said Susan with a smile, "you wish her to come and stay with us."

"I do, indeed; you see she *is* my cousin, and if you have no objection—"

"*I* object! I, who used to love her so! I will

write and beg her to come immediately,—poor Carry Clinton!"

A kind and pressing letter was accordingly sent, and after some little time had elapsed Caroline Clinton came to England, and to Grosvenor Square. She was warmly welcomed by Lady Glenalton, who remembered the days of her own dependance on the cold and haughty Lady John Haslingden, and who, from the first hour of her friend's domestication with them, determined to treat her as one of the family.

These demonstrations of kindness were received with more apparent satisfaction than gratitude; and Susan soon felt instinctively that Mrs. Clinton was a person with whom, to use a common colloquial expression, "it was impossible to get on," beyond a certain point. In her most gentle and coaxing moments (and she was always gentle and coaxing) you felt that she was cold. Her smile had ever more of compliment than of kindness in it; her eye generally wore one expression, that of quiet scrutiny; and the unchanging sweetness of her slow whispering voice seemed the result of long practice and determined resolution never to be put out of temper.

She wore—not weeds, for that would have been a mockery of her position, but very pretty and becoming mourning; had a grave composed manner, a graceful figure, and a face which those who admired her might have thought pretty, and those who did not would pronounce plain.

She never talked of herself or of her own affairs, but she listened with apparent interest to the affairs of other people; gave excellent advice, in a low languid tone, and piqued herself on guessing characters on a short acquaintance.

Such was Caroline Clinton; and such as she was, Susan, who was vain, communicative, and irresolute—many years younger than her friend, and accustomed to live with a beloved sister—grew to confide in her, and to listen to her opinions with deference. She did

not *love* Mrs. Clinton as warmly as she expected when she first invited her to come and renew an acquaintance formed some years before she was capable of judging, but she looked up to her; she did not pity her friend as she used to do, when talking over "poor Carry Clinton's" history with Glenalton, but she trusted her; and while all thoughts of the delayed pension seemed set aside, and the London season fleeted by, Mrs. Clinton gradually obtained a sort of power over both Glenalton and his wife which it is difficult to define, and which is acquired, not by acuteness of understanding or superior strength of mind, but by that rare and perhaps not very enviable quality —the capability of *never acting upon impulse.*

Meanwhile the young bride was an object of immense interest in society. She was the prettiest bride of the season, the best minuet dancer, wore the finest lace (blonde was little valued in those days), and wore it in the most graceful fashion. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted her twice,—as a shepherdess feeding a single pet lamb, and as a nymph flying from a group of satyrs—besides a half length of Diana, still unfinished at the time of our story; the prince regent declared her to be the handsomest woman at a very full opera, and the most popular of royal dukes was reckoned among her admirers. Susan enjoyed her triumphs, and forgot in some measure her disappointments at home, under the influence of the all-absorbing passion of vanity: and this merely for vanity's sake; there was nothing of the coquet in her disposition; still less was her heart disposed to make to itself a new dream of affection, even had she not shrunk from the thought as a deadly sin. She felt cold, and chilled, and altered; something of harshness and distrust mingled with her regret when she thought of old days; and though she readily and cheerfully obeyed sundry rules respecting visiters and companionships laid down by the jealous Glenalton (who found showing off his bride a pleasure not unmixed with pain), she

could not help smiling with contempt at the want of penetration which made him think them necessary.

In the native warmth of her heart, and in gratitude for the kindness Catharine had received from him, Lady Glenalton took pains to please old Mr. Brooksby; she consulted with her husband, and made dinners to suit him; she showed him marked and particular attention, and seemed to take any distinction shown to him as a compliment paid to herself. Prouder, cleverer, and more affectionate than Lady John Haslingden, she experienced none of the morbid and vulgar fear felt by the latter, that her connections would affect her position in the world. Lady John had spent her life in endeavouring to prove that, though accident had made her a merchant's daughter, she was quite unsuited to the society which suited him, and felt that he was unfit for the society which suited *her;*—she had a sort of apologetical way of introducing old Mr. Brooksby to any of her friends, which was tantamount to saying, "I beg pardon for introducing this very vulgar, fat old man; but I am in a manner forced to do so, as he is my father; and you need not trouble yourself to talk to him above five minutes." Susan gave exactly the contrary impression. There was something in the confident bend of her sweet frank brow and cordial smile which said, "He is my grandfather—mine—your hostess's,—and therefore one of the persons in this house to be treated with most respect." Mr. Brooksby was astonished to find how much more comfortable he was made in Lady Glenalton's house than in that of his own daughter; and yet Lady Glenalton was a lady of the first fashion! However, as he had long retired from business, he did not think it at all necessary to puzzle himself with calculations *why* this was so, but, satisfied with the result, attached himself exceedingly to Susan, and even ventured to request her to ask a niece of his, who had married a Portuguese wine-merchant in the city, to her masked ball. He had never dared to

propose such a thing to his daughter Adelaide; and when the ready acquiescence was given, and a ticket of invitation placed in his hand, he nearly wept with delight at finding himself of so much consequence in the eyes of his young relation.

Things were in this state, when one day, as Lady Glenalton and Mrs. Clinton were taking their accustomed drive round the ring in Hyde Park, her husband rode up to the carriage and said, with a countenance of great satisfaction, "Here, Susan, I have brought you an old friend of yours, just returned from playing truant at Paris; we are going to have another canter, and then we shall both come home to dine."

Lady Glenalton looked up, and beheld—her faithless lover!

Mechanically she returned Henry Egerton's bow, and when he murmured out a formal sentence of inquiry after Catharine, she formally answered it; but after the startled effort was over, she sank back in the carriage, faint and deadly pale.

Caroline Clinton offered aromatic vinegar and words of condolence—she half guessed, half comforted—alluded to old days, and professed to be at a loss as to the cause of her friend's agitation; in short, she played the game so well, that Susan did, what no woman under any circumstances should ever be betrayed into doing—what the rack itself would scarcely have made "poor Carry Clinton" do—she told the events of her girlhood to her friend, poured forth her love and her sorrow, her regret for the past, and her resolutions for the future;—and worse, far worse than all, she wound up with a request that Lord Glenalton might never know the foolish predilection she had once felt for one who had treated her so unworthily.

"Help me to keep my own secret, dearest Caroline," said she; "help me to avoid this odious dinner;—I am ill—I cannot appear—I will not go down—I know

I shall never be able to behave to him as if nothing had happened."

"If Mr. Egerton is returned to town," said Mrs. Clinton, in a languid and soothing tone; "you will probably be *obliged* to meet him very often in society; don't you think, therefore, you had best summon up resolution enough to begin to-night? I am sure you have too much pride to let him see that you love him still."

"*I* love him! Good heavens, Caroline! I, who am a *wife!*"

A slight smile curled Mrs. Clinton's lip as she replied,—

"Well, my love, if he is (as he ought to be) indifferent to you, it will be all the easier to meet him with quiet dignity."

Susan did her best; and the proud coldness which the sense of deep injury inspires gave to her manner an apparent composure: but every now and then there was a nervous effort to be gay which invariably failed, and both Caroline Clinton and Henry Egerton *saw* that it failed.

Among Lady Glenalton's many admirers was one who interested her as much from his character and disposition as his personal beauty and accomplishments. Lord Frederick Osborne was one of those eager and warm-hearted persons to whom much is forgiven; as a French author has expressed it, "*il etait rempli de cet entousiasme bâtard qui fait excuser les fautes de la jeunesse.*" He was not well-principled, in the strict meaning of the word; but he was full of kindly and honourable feelings, and retained much simplicity of heart in the midst of the corrupting vices of the society to which he belonged. It was on this young adorer of beauty that Susan was expending some of her sweetest smiles when Henry Egerton made his way towards them. After a few commonplaces, Lord Frederick politely relinquished his place to the new-comer, and mingled with the crowd. Mr.

Egerton watched the brow of his fair companion for some minutes, as if lost in melancholy abstraction; then, in a low bitter tone, he said,—

"Experience has taught me that Lady Glenalton was ambitious—but I had yet to learn that she was a *coquet.*"

Susan's eyes flashed fire; but ere the angry answer left her lips, Henry Egerton, waving his hand, said sadly, "Let there be peace between us two!—it is for your own sake I speak, and though my counsels have lost the value they once possessed in your estimation, yet, believe me, the one I would now offer is a salutary one:—Lord Frederick's attentions are remarked."

When Susan spoke, her voice was low and tremulous.

"He is ill calculated to give advice," said she, "who sins against his own theory."

But what avails it to record line by line, and sentence by sentence, what passed between them? The rubicon was passed—they stood on unpermitted ground—explanation followed explanation. Henry Egerton declared that he had never received the memorable letter written to inform him of Glenalton's proposal—that he had hitherto imagined himself more sinned against than sinning, and deemed that Susan had been persuaded into the match she had made; he praised Glenalton; offered to be her guide and monitor, her friend and brother; and Susan felt that she only was to blame in the past, and that of her mingled regret and resentment—*regret* was all that remained.

The London season drew to a close; old Mr. Brooksby died, and bequeathed half his immense property to Lady Glenalton (a circumstance which so offended Lady John Haslingden, that she was barely civil when she met her niece in society); and Susan returned to Loch-Lyne with a heavier heart than she left it. She promised to correspond with Henry Egerton till he should fulfil his intention of

shooting for a fortnight on Glenalton's moors; and though she took greater pains than ever to please her husband, and was conscious that not a thought nor a wish was expressed or felt towards Egerton which would offend the most rigid moralist; still a restless dissatisfied feeling stole over her mind, and the first night of her arrival at the castle she wept in Catharine's arms, as in the days when their mother died.

The months to be spent in Scotland rolled away; Henry Egerton's visit was paid, and many a sailing excursion was made on the bright lake, in the glowing noonday or the shadowy and quiet evening; many a duet was sung, and many a pibroch played on the key-bugle, which died into silence among the purple hills. But before that long protracted visit came to an end, Glenalton had grown cold to his old friend and welcome guest; Susan dared not lift her eyes to his face; and the promise of correspondence was revoked with a mournful shake of the head, and a hoarse whisper of the words, "Better not—oh, believe it is better not! the less we see, the less we hear of each other, the better for the peace of both."

The evening before Lady Glenalton was to return to town, she sat with her sister Kate; and the latter, who had been thoughtfully gazing into the wood-fire, which sent out a cheerful blaze that lit the whole apartment, turned suddenly to her companion, and said,—

"Susan, my own dear little sister, you are going from me—will you take poor Kate's advice? Do not be too friendly with Mr. Egerton—often we imagine we are only feeling what is right for a person, and some startling hour shows us the blackness and treachery of our own hearts." And Catharine paused and sighed heavily before she added, "Do not be too intimate with him: and do not trust too much to Caroline Clinton; I scarcely know why, but I feel uneasy about that too;—her character is not a natural one, and on such there is no dependance to be placed."

CHAPTER X.

"Faut-il qu'un seul sentiment depouille ainsi toute la vie?"—*Corinne.*

AGAIN the London season began; and again Susan was immersed in all the vanities and amusements of the preceding spring. Her home was less comfortable, for Glenalton, at once cold and jealous, moodily insisted on some things and objected to others—and Susan's conscience forbade her to ask the reason of the change in his manner, for she felt there was also a change in her own. Mrs. Clinton's mourning was over, and occasionally she was included in the invitations to Lord and Lady Glenalton. She made the most of her advantages, and was that most wearisome of characters, a universally popular person. If she had dislikes, she concealed them—if she was *ennuyée*, she courageously hid it;—her life was one of mingled stratagem and effort; there was no one whose position was so brilliant as to inspire her with that sort of hopeless awe felt by some of their superiors; nor was there any one who was unworthy, in *her* estimation, of the exertion to please. Her favourite maxim (which she occasionally repeated, with languid emphasis, to the incredulous Susan Glenalton) was—"Never offend any one, for you can never know what power they may hereafter have to injure you; never neglect any one, for you never know what power they may hereafter have to serve you; and never decline any acquaintance, however insignificant, for the day may come when you would give the world to be intimate with those very people."

She watched the intimacy between Lady Glenalton and Henry Egerton with a lynx's eye, and Susan grew to dread that soft smile, so full of subdued meaning, which seemed to say that her thoughts were read and the beatings of her heart listened to.

It was about this time that Susan began to feel discontented with her friend—she scarcely knew why. It was not that she opposed or betrayed her; on the contrary, she had ever a soothing sentence for Glenalton, and defended all Susan's whims (for it is when we are restless and unhappy that we grow to have caprices) with apparent warmth; but in her very defence of things objected to she contrived to mingle something bitter—something which grated harshly upon the ear, and left an unpleasant impression on the mind; and Susan gradually became accustomed to alter the indulgent speech of, "Caroline is very kind, but she does not understand Glenalton; she does not see at all what irritates him,"—to—"Surely Caroline is very provoking! she always contrives to say the wrong thing—she should not allude so constantly to my being so much admired, knowing how jealous he is—nor talk of me as if I was a light-hearted, giddy, foolish thing, only occupied with the pleasures of the world. Nothing vexes Glenalton so much, and nothing is further from the truth."

A circumstance, trifling in itself (as many facts are, which nevertheless make a strong impression), contributed to the discontent of her mind. Lord Glenalton had given her a seal-ring on her birthday, the taste and magnificence of which had particularly pleased her. The initials and coronet were cut on a single diamond. The ring was too small, and she took it to the jeweller's to have it altered, who, on receiving it, said, quietly,—

"I beg your ladyship a thousand pardons; the fact is, there has been some mistake—Mrs. Clinton gave the order, and the ring has been made to her size."

There was no great offence in Glenalton's having

intrusted her dear friend with this little commission; but some undefined instinct in her heart made Susan less contented, after the discovery, with her birthday gift. It seemed to her that "poor Carry Clinton" was becoming gradually the mainspring by which all was governed in her home. Occasionally (especially when differed with in the presence of her husband) her manner was harsh and repulsive both towards him and Mrs. Clinton; and when the latter would come in a coaxing manner, and, gently taking her hand, murmur, "You must not let your vexations make you cross to your old friend—and, above all, for your *own* sake, you must not let them influence your manner to Glenalton"—Susan's heart would chill; and her tone would be harsher than before, as she brooded over the lecture, and the thought that her efforts to please her husband had been somehow unaccountably frustrated.

"How different he is from what I thought when I married him!" said she to herself; "how cold—how sullen! If he would only come to me, and openly and frankly confess that he was jealous of Henry Egerton, and request me to give up seeing him, I am sure I would do so—if I was unable to convince him that friendship and kindliness for the sake of old days is all I feel towards him; but Glenalton gives me no opportunity for explanation, he treats me like a child—like a vain coquet—he does not know the terms we were once on: how I repent not having confessed it all when I married! how I repent having married at all under the circumstances! Into whose hands could my letter have fallen? and what is to be the end of all this?"

The end was nigh at hand. Henry Egerton's attentions became open, marked, and incessant; sufficiently in love (as has been already seen) to do all *but* sacrifice the interests of his future by making an imprudent match; moved by perceiving how deep-rooted was the affection which he had so lightly repaid, and

disposed, from the natural vanity of his character, to affix a double value to the preference of one whom the world had now singled out as a "pure and perfect star"—he forgot to play the friend and brother with as much accuracy as at the first renewal of their acquaintance. Glenalton found his wife in tears one morning (when he unexpectedly entered the drawing-room, after having coldly shaken hands with Egerton, whom he met on the stairs); he inquired the cause of her distress; she shrank from him and complained of illness.

"We will start for Scotland in three days from this time," said Lord Glenalton. "Loch-Lyne is better for you than London; and I request," added he, almost sternly, as he bent his eye upon her downcast face, "that you will receive no *visiters* during that time."

Susan bowed her head in token of obedience, and without one word of explanation by note or otherwise with her former lover, she departed for Scotland. But Henry Egerton was not to be so baffled; he wrote more in the indignant style of an injured friend conscious of the rectitude of his intentions than as a lover; he reproached, he argued, he insisted on an explanation of this unwarrantable treatment. Susan answered him: she spoke of her husband, her duties, her consciousness that their friendship could only end in misery to both; she besought him to leave her to her destiny. The last words in her long and melancholy letter were as follows:—

"That I did once love you dearly—oh! most dearly!—no one knows better than yourself; that I still feel more interest in all that concerns you than I dare confess to my own heart, you also know. Do not reward the true and tried affection of years by tempting me to do evil. Do not write to me—do not think of me. Let me only hear of you by chance, as of one lost to me for ever. Remember me! but only as a dream of the irrevocable past; speak of

me as one whom death has divided from you—for strong as death is the barrier between us; and when long years have passed away, I may be able to meet you with a smile, and to thank you with earnest gratitude for listening to the prayer of one who *petitions*, because she feels she has not strength and resolution enough to *command*."

The reply to this epistle, which appeared to Henry Egerton to contain far more to encourage him to hope than to bid him despair, was put into Lady Glenalton's hand by her husband. His brow was dark and his cheek pale, and he spoke with considerable emotion.

"I perceive," said he, "that although I have withdrawn you from scenes of temptation, you still court ruin—you still correspond with one whom you have every reason to know I disapprove of as your friend. I have been advised to leave you to yourself,—to await the future with what patience I may,—and not indulge in useless recriminations, and still more vain counsels; but I have considered that in so doing I sin against one whom it is my vowed duty to protect. You are young—very young. You were a mere girl when you (rashly for yourself and miserably for me) took upon yourself the character of a wife. I therefore once openly warn you to beware—and I command you, as your husband, never more to correspond with Mr. Egerton, or to see him in your own house."

Susan wept while he spoke, and coming near her, he laid his hand on her head and murmured,—

"God bless you, Susan—and preserve you from sin! Warning cannot save—love cannot earn love—but *he* can help you!"

When she looked up he had left the room; and after weeping till her heavy eyes could scarcely decipher the written words, she broke the seal of Henry Egerton's letter. It was short, but its contents were startling.

"In obedience to what, as *your* request, is more to me than a king's command, I am about to leave England for years—perhaps for ever! A friend of mine intends visiting Constantinople; my arrangements are now completed for accompanying him; nor shall I return from the Continent till years have *weakened* (for eternity itself could not destroy) the feelings that burn in my heart. Yes! you have decided justly; it *is* right that we should part; it *is* madness to hope that love such as ours *was* can fade into mere regard; and it shall never be mine to wring that pure heart with unnecessary sorrow. In three weeks my departure will take place, and I can then offend those who surround you no more! Will you refuse the last prayer of one who has answered yours with such ready obedience? Let me *see* you! Let me hear the word 'farewell' from those sweet lips, and then I care not what becomes of me. I am about to visit (*for one week*) your neighbour Lord A——. I have calculated that you will receive my letter on Tuesday, but allowing for casualties and Scotch posts, I have restrained my impatience, and have fixed on Friday as the day on which I trust to see you—remember, for the *last* time. I shall wait on Lord A.'s side of the lake, and not cross till I see a signal on yours—a white or red handkerchief, or some token that you expect me at Little Creek, the loneliest and the most beautiful of spots. Do you remember the happy, happy hours we spent there last year? But all that is past—is nothing. I have obeyed you, and trust to your granting my request: I think I deserve it, Susan!

"H. E."

With her hand pressed hard against her brow, Lady Glenalton remained for some minutes in an agony of doubt and indecision. Then starting up, she passed hurriedly from the room, through the long corridor, to the library where Glenalton generally

sat. Mrs. Clinton was with him; but as Susan entered she lifted two heavy volumes and retired through the opposite door.

"Will you hear me for a few minutes, Glenalton?" said the young wife.

A momentary irresolution was visible on his countenance, and his eye glanced for an instant towards the door by which Mrs. Clinton had retired. Then in a moody and dispirited tone he said,—

"No, Susan; there is nothing you *can* say which will alter the past. You know your duty to me—you have deceived me once—you may deceive me again—but at least I have done mine by you!"

"How different from the tone in which he blessed me one short hour ago!" thought Susan. "*Then* I could have made any sacrifice to prove to him that I was only unhappy, not unworthy of his affection; but *now!* And why is he thus capricious with me? Who *advised him to leave me to myself?* Who told him I had once deceived him?" and again the thought of Caroline Clinton flashed across her mind, and she felt chilled, and pained, and angry, as on former occasions. She had intended to consult her husband; to refuse the request of her lover: she left the library with a determination to meet Henry Egerton in the manner proposed.

As she prepared to steal out on the morning of this appointment, Catharine Dalrymple detained her—"Sister," said she, "I have something heavy on my heart to communicate to you. Do not be impatient with poor Kate, though the days *are* gone by when your heart was more willing to listen to me; *I* see that you are changed; *I* feel that the love I dreaded has crept into your heart, and blinded your understanding: oh! hear me, dearest! sinful love is a bitter and a wearing sorrow; I know it—*I have felt it.* Yes," added she, as Susan started, "cruel though she was, Lady John Haslingden was right when she said that I was vicious; lonely prayer has brought

me peace, and Moorfields is now a dream; but *then* —I forget, it is of you that I would speak; or rather to you that I would give this packet, which tells its own story without words of mine. It is a painful cure, Susan, but you need it!"

When Lady Glenalton took the letters, a dead coldness struck to her heart; her letter to Henry Egerton before her marriage was there, enclosed in one to Mrs. Wilmot, containing in his well-known handwriting these words:—"*Do I not sacrifice something to your love? Am I not here, lingering by your side, and this appeal recalling me! Doubt no longer then, but tell me what you wish said in answer.*" The whole was enclosed in an envelope from Mrs. Wilmot herself, addressed to Catharine; the bitter vengeance of a forsaken woman having prompted her to this method of breaking off Mr. Egerton's intimacy with Lady Glenalton. Her letter was couched in taunting and insulting terms, and affirmed that Caroline Clinton had read the one enclosed, while in Mrs. Wilmot's possession, and could affirm it to be no forgery.

But nothing further could sting or wound; a sudden cloud seemed to clear away from Susan's eyes. She saw herself tricked by her lover, deceived by her friend, baffled by her enemy. Without a word of reproach or comment she enclosed the letter to Henry Egerton, as a sufficient cause for her non-appearance at the lake's side; and returned to commune with her own heart, and be still. There was but one, the true, the noble-hearted Glenalton, whose words still rang in her ear—"Warning cannot save—love cannot earn love—but God can help you."

"I *am* saved!" murmured Susan, as she sank on her knees; "saved when I least deserved it; saved through the very wiles of my worst foe; and oh! may Heaven make me grateful!"

But affections once lost are not easily regained. Glenalton, to whom "poor Carry Clinton" had

treacherously confided the history of Susan's attachment, was not a man to forgive easily. His feelings were strong, he was a proud and a disappointed man; and he was also of a frank and open disposition, which led him to scorn the deception (as he thought) practised upon him by Susan. He allowed her no opportunity of explaining while the short-lived impulse lasted; and when at length she locked up all the bitterness of the past in her own bosom, and buried alike her mortification and regrets, the mutual coldness of their manner precluded all conversation on such subjects.

The weary season of gayety was again commenced; Susan was again the star and idol of her circle. Princes praised, poets flattered, and painters sketched her; and her heart, restless and dissatisfied, gave itself up to the pleasures of the world; feeding its quenchless thirst at that fountain which never yet calmed or comforted—the glittering springs of vanity!

Caroline Clinton still soothed, still advised; and praised Lord Frederick Osborne as she had been wont to praise Henry Egerton. She wormed the secret of Mrs. Wilmot's letter from Susan, with a skill peculiar to herself; and denied her own share in the transaction with such unusual vehemence and scorn that Susan could not choose but believe her. They remained friends; though Susan felt as if her bruised heart was too cold ever to feel affection for any human being except her sister Kate. A sense of injury from *all* connected with her destiny—her aunt, her lover, her husband—stole gradually over her mind, and she fell into that worst mistake of morbid feelings, viz. that of supposing her own individual fate harder than any other in the world.

CHAPTER XI.

"There were Love's friends—hope, joy, and generous trust;
Here are his foes—care, caution, and disgust.
There was the warm, confiding soul of youth;
Here doubt and care, and cold assent to truth."

CRABBE.

"You need not sit up for me, Nina," said Lady Glenalton, as she clasped the last bracelet on her arm; "you must be tired already with walking so much about to see the illuminations."

"No, miledi, I am not tired;" but a little suppressed yawn belied the assertion of the bright-eyed abigail; and as the carriage rolled from the door, she hurried the splendid jewels, from which the night's *parure* had been chosen, into their casket, and tripped up-stairs, exclaiming, in the fulness of her heart, "Miledi is so kind, so *thinking!*"

It was the prince's birthday. The streets that led to M—— Square were crowded with carriages. London, to whom the glory of gas was yet unknown, was bright with illuminations; and an enthusiastic and drunken people shouted their approbation of the sight.

The carriage moved slowly along, and Susan, rapt in her own reflections, answered vaguely and abstractedly to her companion. A soft and mocking smile stole over Caroline Clinton's face as she made her last successless attempt to engage Lady Glenalton in conversation.

"You are thinking of the duke, Susan," said she; and Susan started.

"I was," said Susan; "is it a fault to do so?"

"No, indeed. It would be strange if you, who are always so eager, felt coldly only towards him, whose name kindles enthusiasm in every heart; and it would be ungrateful too, for I am very sure he does not feel coldly to you."

"You should not say those sort of things; it is disrespectful," said Lady Glenalton, who scarcely knew whether to be vexed or pleased at the insinuation, so strong was the demon vanity in her heart.

"You speak childishly; there can be no harm in his admiring you, as long as you do not fall in love with him; a woman's conduct is always in her own power; Lord Glenalton approves of your intimacy with the duke, indeed is anxious you should be liked by him."

"Yes, because he trusts me," said Susan, with a sigh.

"Pooh, my dear, he neither trusts nor distrusts; he does not in fact think about it; he is full of the *advantages* of such a friendship. Scotch people are always proud, and prefer acquaintances in the grade above them to the dearest friends of their own rank; and Glenalton is too sensible not to see, that having been buried in Scotland great part of his life, unseeing and unseen, it gives him great eclât and facility on his entrance into society to have a lovely wife, and to be friends with a prince of the blood royal. Besides," said she, softening her voice to its most sleepy and musical tone, "he is so used to see you admired!"

But the smoothness of the last phrase did not calm the irritation caused by the preceding discourse. Vain people are not the most indulgent to the vice of vanity.

Susan felt wounded and offended at the manner in which her husband was mentioned, and the sentiments ascribed to him. She felt hurt too at the apparent truth of Mrs. Clinton's observations. Glen-

alton had never spoken to her to chide or to warn respecting the duke, although his unceasing jealousy seldom spared the most indifferent acquaintance; he had indeed appeared to encourage her penchant for him, and had once hinted to her that he thought his rank entitled him to hope the duke would dine at his house, and that if she had an opportunity of mentioning this hope, she might do so. She recalled to herself little circumstances, forgotten or passed over at the time, which corroborated her present impression; and a bitter feeling took possession of her heart.

The carriage stopped before the silence which followed Mrs. Clinton's speech was broken. Susan's step was prouder than usual as she stepped into the lighted saloon: it was long since that step had the lightness of gayety, or the hesitation of timidity in it; she was now a woman of the world; the consciousness of beauty and power was in her every gesture; and her eyes had lost their eagerness—those wild bright eyes were still bright, but there was no joyousness or curiosity in their expression: a cold and careless glance round the brilliant assembly, and she moved on;—a physiognomist could have read in that glance (in spite of the smooth cheek and youthful brow and slight figure) that girlhood's hope and expectation had passed away.

Glenalton stood near the door. "You are late to-night, miledi," said he, smilingly, "considering it is a royal party."

Susan answered briefly, and with an involuntary harshness of tone; her husband moved away, looked at a buhl clock-case, pointed out its beauty to Mrs. Clinton, and finally motioning her to a chair, sat down by her and entered into conversation.

Lady Glenalton remained standing; she was listening to the complaint of a fat Irish countess, who was vehemently abusing a lady who had ventured to copy the new setting of her diamonds. "And

you know, my dearest Lady Glenalton, it was doubly shameful, because I particularly ordered the jeweller not to show the pattern; and it was all drawn for me by my cousin Louisa, roses and shamrocks, and that dreadful Lady Sinclair went and copied it; had all *her* diamonds set the same way (which will oblige me to reset mine in some other manner); and then when I expostulated with the jeweller (for of course I did not choose to condescend to show how angry I was to that horrid Lady Sinclair), what do you think he said?"

"I suppose he apologized," said Susan, quietly.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all; on the contrary, he said, in the most insolent manner, when I declared I never would employ him again, and would immediately have my diamonds set at some other house —'Well, my lady, I'm exceedingly sorry, but your ladyship chose such a common pattern!' A common pattern! but I have written to my cousin Louisa, to tell her, and to desire she will make a new pattern: stars—how do you think stars would look? or hearts with roses between? Yours are very well set; who did them?"

"I don't know; Lord Glenalton gave me the combs and band for my hair, and the others were given me by Lady John Haslingden."

"Ah! you are afraid I shall copy the setting, and you won't tell me; but—goodness! if she isn't coming to speak to you;" and as *she* (the horrid Lady Sinclair) advanced, the fat countess waddled off, boiling with indignation, to relate to some other listener the painful act of treachery on the part of the jeweller, and imitativeness on the part of her friend.

Lady Sinclair now had her turn; and added to *her* version of the diamond story, the fact that she had determined to have a larger drop than Lady Ballyna, and had told Sir Robert Sinclair so; and that he had said it was impossible to afford it. "But I told Sir

Robert," said she, with grave solemnity, "that I had rather every tree at Kisnacloch should be cut down, and the moors let for twenty years, than not have a larger drop to my necklace than that dreadful Lady Ballyna."

And all this time Susan's lip never wavered from the conventional smile with which people in good society listen to uninteresting communications. No half-suppressed sneer of ridicule, no irresistible merriment sparkling in her eye, betrayed how amusing or contemptible such distresses appeared to her. Nor was it difficult to keep her countenance. She had forgotten the time when such scenes would have provoked her to mirth; she had forgotten the way in which she involuntarily glanced round to share the jest with Henry Egerton; she had forgotten all the fresh natural feelings of her youth; she was now a woman of the world.

Diamonds! What a strange passion! what a curious disease! what a topic for speculative curiosity is the thirst which some women feel for these precious articles! And, as if it were not enough to spend thousands of pounds on what paste and glass may be made to imitate, they must needs have better than their neighbours, and, in the desire to outshine, forget every thing else. Many a handsome woman enters a room, far prouder of the stones in her hair and on her bosom than of all the real advantages nature has given her; and many an ugly woman has ruined her husband, and starved her tradespeople, that she might have a larger drop to her necklace than Lady Ballyna. Why? Is the handsome woman happier or even more admired? is the ugly woman less ugly with her diamonds than without them?

Of all the different madnesses and false tastes created by idleness and luxury, surely this is the most unaccountable! A certain lady of fashion was for years in the habit of collecting emeralds, pearls, and

other precious stones, one by one; and after she had a sufficient number for a necklace, she would request her husband to "set them." Extravagance in proportion with this branch of expenditure gradually consumed what had originally been a splendid fortune; the lady sighed over the increasing embarrassment of their circumstances, but continued her collection of jewels. At length the day arrived when they were *pronounced* ruined, who had long been so in reality. The lady behaved beautifully on the occasion; agreed to every species of retrenchment; but refused to give up her jewels, which would have covered almost the half of their debts. Tempted some time afterward by a jeweller's advertisement, she went out, succeeded in bargaining for the most pure and perfect of emeralds, and, on her return, found that her husband, who had been long in low spirits, had shot himself through the head. The jury brought in a verdict of *lunacy*, and all his friends went about regretting that they had not foreseen and prevented his melancholy end; but no one saw madness in the lady's conduct: and she afterward made a rich banker (her second husband) set that very emerald as a drop to the most superb necklace ever worn at court by any one under the rank of a royal duchess.

"Did you ever see any thing so handsome as that woman!" said one dandy to another, as for a moment, by strong compression of the eyebrow, he held an eye-glass to perfect his view of Lady Glenalton.

"I don't know; I like more variety; I think she herself was handsomer when a girl. There was less repose, but there was more attraction; her eye used to wander round, and shrink away when it had found what it most wished to see, in the most bewitching manner. She had more colour then; and she used to blush when she was pleased, or frightened, or angry, or—in short, every third sentence was

given with a smile and a blush. She was more *my style* then."

"Did you know her well?" said young Lord Frederick Osborne, who had stood by the speakers, gazing also at Lady Glenalton.

"Oh, yes; as one knows people in the same set. But hush! Look, here comes the royal wooer!"

A flush passed over Lord Frederick's fair brow, and he moved a step or two away from his companions. Through a yielding circle, who made way on each side with hurried obeisance, the duke slowly advanced; his eagle eye recognising in a moment such of the company as were entitled to the familiarity of conversation, and leaving with each the impression which his frank though princely address never failed to create. He felt that he was beloved; and perhaps this feeling added to the kindness of manner which was habitual with him, and which will long be remembered by hundreds who still speak his name with a mournful satisfaction.

He reached the spot where Lady Glenalton stood, and paused.

"Madam," said he, "I never saw you look so beautiful!"

Susan courtesied to the ground; and as she looked up and smiled an answer to the compliment, she felt, and the lookers-on *saw*, that her cheek glowed with a crimson as deep and rich as the lost blush of her girlhood had ever given. It was not *all* vanity, nor was it love, but a mixture of feelings impossible to describe—the memory of Caroline Clinton's observations that evening, and, above all, the vague consciousness which those observations had created. As she raised her eyes, she caught those of her female friend fixed, as it were, searchingly upon her; she smiled, too, a *sourire d'intelligence;* and Susan's heart beat quick, and her voice faltered, and her glance sank when the duke spoke again. He was surprised, he was pleased, he was struck; Lady Glenalton's man-

ner was in general so proud, so composed. His own manner grew more kindly, more earnest; his voice and smile softened; and Susan Glenalton felt that Mrs. Clinton was right, when she said he did not feel coldly to her.

"You are tired, madam," said he, after a short pause; "be seated, I beg."

Susan obeyed, and he seated himself by her side. The widening circle looked on at a little distance, and made the usual conjectures and remarks which envy, curiosity, and idleness engender. The prince himself was less an object of attention that night, so rapt was the little world of countesses and lords in observing this newly apparent flirtation in their orbit.

Lord Frederick Osborne was among the gazers; pained and saddened, a strange fascination yet compelled him to look and wonder, and endeavour to divine that deep mystery, a woman's heart, and decide in his own soul whether the idol he so worshipped was unworthy the incense so lavishly offered up by him. Once he bowed, mechanically, as if to recall Susan to herself; but she saw him not. She had just ventured to propose to the duke to dine in Grosvenor Square. His acceptance was eager and cordial; and again Caroline Clinton's remarks recurred to Lady Glenalton's mind, and sent a flush to her cheek.

"It shall be Wednesday, then," said the duke, rising; "good-night, madam."

He took her hand, as he spoke, dropped it, and motioning his aid-de-camp, departed from the assembly. A thousand flatterers crowded to fill the vacant space. Smiling dowagers with birds of paradise in their spangled toques; dandies who had been prevented as yet from paying their court; beauties who were undecided whether to coax or defy this reigning goddess; graver persons, who thought, while speaking *their* word with Lady Glenalton, of the word *she*

might speak to the duke; general officers and ministers of state; duchesses, who invariably treated with distinction those who enjoyed popular success; and constant only to this principle, stood, as it were, ever in the sunshine, and stirred not to look after those who passed into the shade—all crowded round Lady Glenalton. She was flattered, *fêted*, caressed; it was an evening of triumph.

Lord Frederick Osborne did not immediately approach her.

"How cold and forlorn you look!" said she, gayly, as her eye fell upon his dispirited countenance; "I am sure you have lost your heart. You are not ill, are you?" added she, more kindly, as he stepped forward to the chair occupied by the duke, and, resting one hand upon it, returned her greeting.

"No," said he, hurriedly, and in a low voice; "I am not ill—not body-sick, at least—only sick at heart; but lose what I may, I have not yet lost my reason, and where I cease to respect, I cease to love! I could not have thought—"

He suddenly ceased speaking, for he caught Lady Glenalton's eyes turned full upon him. In those cold, dark, unshrinking eyes he read an inquiry as to the meaning of words spoken with so much emotion; then a cloud of sadness darkened them for a moment, and Lady Glenalton turned away with a stifled sigh. But for that sigh, mistaken as he was in its import, Frederick Osborne would never have found courage to avow his long-cherished passion for Lady Glenalton; but for that sigh, Susan would never have been humbled into reflecting how she had brought upon herself such a confession.

What he said, he himself hardly knew; rapid and passionate words; accusations of coquetry and ambition; taunts as to her preference, open and avowed, for the duke; tenderness choked back by the manner in which he was listened to, and all the wild devotion of a young, generous, and ill-regulated heart, poured

forth under the excitement of jealousy, and the suddenness of the occasion. Such, so mingled, so various, and so confused, were the feelings Lord Frederick attempted to express, as he stood with his back turned to the crowd, and his hand grasping the gilded and cushioned back of the vacant chair, whose late occupant he had so envied.

Lady Glenalton listened, breathless with surprise and consternation; she looked round, the company were dispersing, the rooms were thinned, and Lord Glenalton and Mrs. Clinton appeared from the supper-room.

"Don't make a scene, Lord Frederick," said she, in a severe tone.

At this moment a slight confusion took place; "The prince is going," was whispered on all sides. The prince passed Lady Glenalton with a gracious smile, and a remark on the last opera. Susan answered with proud composure, but her lip and cheek were paler than usual; the beautiful mistress of the house remarked it, and advised her friend to drink a glass of eau sucrée; then passing on, she conducted her royal guest to the door. Lady Glenalton moved away; the rose which she wore in her bosom broke from its stalk, and fell to the ground; Lord Frederick stooped and picked it up.

"I may keep it—may I not?" said he, pleadingly; "say yes, and I shall feel forgiven."

The tears stood in his eyes, which were raised to Lady Glenalton's; but without meeting his gaze, with a slight grave bow, and a still slighter smile, she extended her hand for the flower.

"Glenalton, have you thought of calling the carriage?" said she; and, with another bow to Lord Frederick, as he returned the broken rose, she was gone.

Frederick Osborne followed two or three steps mechanically, offered his arm to Mrs. Clinton, and attended them to the carriage. He fancied, till the last

moment, that a look, a sigh, a gesture, would tell him that at least she had heard him without resentment—but no; Lady Glenalton looked not again towards her young lover, she was now "a woman of the world."

Nothing is more curious than the depression which follows an evening spent like that which Susan had just concluded. A false and unnatural excitement, where nothing is good, nothing noble, nothing lasting, is that created by vanity;—there is no consciousness of energies exerted to a useful or praiseworthy purpose, to support us while in action, or give the feeling of satisfied repose afterward. The bright bubble bursts, and all is blank, dark, and void.

Caroline Clinton wore one of her softest smiles, as she paused at the landing of the stairs, to wish her friend good-night.

"This has been an evening of triumph for you, Susan; I think it would have shaken even Lady John Haslingden's belief in the advantages of birth;—how many a duchess must have envied you to-night, and how many of our great ladies wished they had been Susan Dalrymple?"

"Yes—but I am too tired to think about my successes just now," said Susan, with forced gayety; "so, good-night!"

"Good-night!" and the door closed, and left the flattered beauty to solitude and her own thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

"Triumph, what art thou? Something made
To fill the empty breast,
Which feels its want of holier joys,
And yearns to be at rest!"

Two hours rolled away, and found Susan in the same attitude of revery. Her cheek rested heavily on her hand, and her beautiful hair, freed from its circlet of diamonds and half loosened, hung in masses on her shoulders. Thought after thought chased each other through her mind, and all seemed alike dreary and comfortless. Her husband's coldness, and apparently causeless displeasure and caprice, Caroline Clinton's smile with its mocking sweetness, Lord Frederick Osborne's mad avowal of love—all oppressed her with a confused memory. And then her sister's voice seemed to ask what had wrought this fearful change. Her sister! ay, even that remembrance, the dearest portion of her vanishing youth, was no longer what it had been—no longer the every-day thought, but by fits and starts remembered or forgot. Vanity, however freely fed, can never suffice to a woman's heart; and as Susan Glenalton sat alone that night, her heart sickened and went back to the days when all she desired to win or keep was the affection of those around her. The bright days spent with Catharine on the hills at Loch-Lyne came back to her in that perfumed and crimson-curtained room.

"Ah! happy days," murmured Susan, half aloud.

as she at length raised her head, "*can* I never again feel as I did then?"

She looked into the mirror, shaded as it was by its transparent rose-coloured and white curtains, and surrounded by all the luxuries of the toilet, and almost started at the expression of her countenance. Was that indeed the same being who had been the observed of all observers at Lady ——'s? that pale weary brow, with its gaze of unutterable sadness, was that the same which dazzled and smiled beneath its circlet of diamonds two hours ago? Yes! there it was; there was the worthless beauty which had been insufficient to chain Henry Egerton, to which Glenalton had grown indifferent; which had attraction enough to burden her heart with bad men's sighs, but no power over those she wished to charm.

She gazed on her face reflected in that glass, and while she felt her possession of beauty such as is rarely bestowed, she also felt that it had never been to her other than a curse and a temptation.

Among the wild and splendid creations of German fancy, there is one which is rather an allegory than a superstition,—I mean the demon-gifts which, with all the promise and appearance of gain, are somehow unaccountably made to turn to the disadvantage and ruin of their possessor. How often in the *real* world does this mockery of success attend us! How often are we envied for the sake of what after all is but a demon-gift!

Such seemed the gift of beauty to Susan, the evening of her triumph. What had it availed her? She looked back to her girlish days, when she was the object of universal admiration, which she was too innocent and too happy to value. She was envied then, but she was careless as to success. She thought with a sigh of the days which followed—of the love that faded—the trust that ceased;—Glenalton admired her, and she was envied then; but she would have given more for one kind smile and a word of

old days from Henry Egerton than for the richest chance fortune could offer. And now, now that success seemed yet to attend her, now that the envy of others had increased in proportion to the ease with which she seemed to win all she could desire—*she* felt, in the shrinking solitude of her own heart, that she would give all the brilliant worldly advantages she possessed to be able to feel that she was beloved by her husband as in the days when that love seemed but importunity; to be able to shake off the wearying trammels and fetters of society, and find peace and rest at home.

Self-reproach, vague and indistinct, mingled with all her recollections; and turning from that flattering mirror, she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly. Yes, she, the fortunate, the envied, wept in her solitude: her smiles were for the world; but the world saw not her sorrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh! curses, cankers, crimes there are
That spot the world with wo;
But TREACHERY is the master fiend—
Most black of all below."

MRS. LEMAN GRIMSTONE.

WHEN Lord Frederick Osborne called, the day after his hurried confession of attachment, he was not admitted. Lady Glenalton was out, and had left a note for him. Instinctively he felt that its contents were calculated to crush the madly aspiring hopes which he had entertained, and thrusting it into his bosom he drove home. He thought that the haughty reproof, which her manner had led him to expect, would best be read in silence and solitude.

Susan Glenalton's note contained no reproach. Sad and subdued, she had written mournfully to her young lover, and rather besought a pardon than granted one.

"Forgive me," wrote she, "if my restless vanity has misled you; I am sufficiently punished and humbled in the thought that so little was your esteem and respect for me, that you could address me as you did last night without fear of a repulse. When you can look back upon the past as a dream, you will again be welcomed with cordiality and gladness by one who has ever felt deep and sincere interest in your welfare. You have made me pause in a heedless path, and for that check (though painfully given) *I thank you.* Let it not be a matter of regret to your kindly heart that you have rendered me this service instead of inspiring me with an unholy passion; you

are worthy a purer love than that which you sought; and that you may think seriously and anxiously (as I have done) of the peril and temptation of the past, is the earnest prayer of one who has much to repent of."

The time had indeed arrived when Susan paused to reflect. The dream of love had faded from her heart—the dream of vanity had proved insufficient to content her. She was startled when she contrasted her present self with what she had been: the falsehood and folly of the pleasures she had been pursuing; the licentious admiration of fools; the misguided devotion of better hearts; the sacrifice of all care for the future to the enjoyment of the present; the eternal round of petty excitements; the struggles, the envy, the heart-burnings; the bitter hours of solitude and worthless moments of triumph—all suddenly forced themselves upon her, and she felt that a canker had eaten into her heart, and destroyed all the bloom, the purity, and the freshness of its affections.

Oh! there is nothing to equal those moments of desperate awakening when we first become *conscious* that we are corrupted! when some sudden shock arouses us to a knowledge of our true position, and shows us that the ground we have so long been carelessly treading is hollow beneath our feet, the precipice near at hand to which we have been blindly directing our steps! The sick man who is told that mortification alone has stilled the torture of his aching limb, cannot receive such intelligence with more chilled and shrinking horror than is felt by the heart which, pure heretofore, and full of earnest resolutions for the right, has been led away by temptation, and only wakes to feel the bitterness of its moral degradation; to know that the days of its purity and innocence are over; that vice is become a familiar thing; that all is known of which we should have been ignorant; and all forgotten which should have been most

carefully treasured in our memories; that in our sorrow we have become "acquainted with sin," and have made it our boon-companion and fellow-traveller in the great journey of life.

There are days made so dark by the misery which oppresses us—by the vain desire to undo the irrevocable past, to bathe in the waters of oblivion, and begin our lives anew—that our weak and feverish brains would madden with brooding on our own rashness, did not the mild glory shine from afar of that light which first rose to promise "peace on earth and good-will towards men"—that bright star of the Christian's creed, which, let the past be ever so dark, leaves us still repentance and a future to make our peace with God!

That light broke in on Susan Glenalton's heart, and while it showed the barrenness of the world wherein she had hitherto staked her all, it also brought a holy comfort with it. There is joy and peace even in the resolution and effort to do right; and while she shuddered to think what time might have made her had not mercy been shown in the midst of her career, it was yet with a buoyant spirit that she looked to the future, when, won back by gentleness and determined affection, her husband's love would give that spell which makes the quiet of the cottager's home more precious than the splendours of a palace.

Glenalton, the true, the frank-hearted Glenalton—it was to him now that all her efforts to please were directed, and she shrank from the gayeties and pleasures of the world as much as she had formerly courted them. But her power to win seemed over! Lord Glenalton appeared sometimes puzzled, sometimes saddened, when in her new mood she attempted playfully to engage him in conversation, or talked to him in the earnest manner of old days; and once or twice some unaccountable irritation would seize him; his eye would flash with violence, and his tone sound so harsh, contemptuous, and bitter, that Susan's heart recoiled within her, and she would retire to weep and

wonder what had wrought this inexplicable change; more angry at the attempted consolation of Caroline Clinton, "not to mind, for that all men were sometimes a little cross," than with all the unkindness which had caused her tears.

"Poor Carry Clinton" had indeed ceased to be the confidant of Lady Glenalton's real or fancied sorrows. The words of Catharine Dalrymple had frequently returned to her sister's mind; she felt that there was justice in her remark that Mrs. Clinton was not a "natural character;" and she asked herself the startling question, "Why should one whose life is a long counterfeit—who can command and compose herself at pleasure—weep at will—feign affection and conceal dislike—and act to all around her—be true only to *me?*" It were well if all young and incautious persons, prone to trust and easily deceived, looked round them and judged in a similar manner. We are too apt to think only how *we* are treated—too little accustomed to observe what is the treatment of *others* by the same person. Watch and weigh: if a man speak evil of his friends to you, he will also speak evil of you to his friends—if he sacrifice other acquaintances to his interests, so will he sacrifice you when occasion serves—if he break faith with another, so, on temptation, will he break faith with you. Kind and caressing words are easily spoken and pleasant to hear, but the man who bears a kind heart bears it to all, and not to one only—he who appears to love only the friend he speaks to, and slanders or speaks coldly of the rest, loves no one but himself.

It was after one of the vain attempts we have mentioned on Lady Glenalton's part to regain the affections of her husband, and while she was sitting thinking with some despondency of the little progress she had made in this much desired object, that a letter was brought her from her sister, to whom she had lately written frequently and sorrowfully. Much of it related to matters in Scotland of which Susan had expressed a

desire to hear, and often repeated hopes that she would shorten the London season, which appeared to give her so little satisfaction, and return to "lovely Loch-Lyne." It concluded thus,—

"You ask me for advice, my own dear sister. You forget how difficult it is to counsel, when one cannot place one's self in the same situation with the person to be advised. To *me* all that you tell of struggles, defeat, and disappointment, of gay engagements you are forced unwillingly to fulfil, and the cold terms on which you live with Glenalton, appears a strange and sad dream. To *me* your course appears so *very* simple! only to go to your husband, instead of guessing and wondering and grieving over how much or how little he has heard of your history, and frankly tell him *all*—in your own sweet voice, looking up in his face with those persuading eyes. You dread it—you think he would not hear you (not hear *you*, Susan!)—and you live on a life of anxiety without any explanation. Try it, dear sister, *try* an explanation with Glenalton; and if the attempt fail (which cannot be), it is only, after all, *one* painful hour past, and you say you pass so many!"

"You are right, Kate—right, my own poor honest-hearted sister!" murmured Susan, as with tearful eyes she pressed the letter to her lips; "and yet I do dread it from my soul."

And the sound of Lord Glenalton's voice in the library at Loch-Lyne, the day she had intended to consult him and *obey*, rang in her ear as distinctly as when she heard it first.

It was after deep self-communion, and not without a short and earnest prayer, that Susan at length resolved upon her plan of conduct. It was the hour when she usually drove out, and she knew Lord Glenalton was generally at home long afterward. She countermanded the carriage and stole down-stairs. Glenalton's sitting-room was beyond the two magnificent drawing-rooms; and these opened, as did the second drawing-room, into a conservatory stored with

beautiful plants. In the first days of their union, when as yet no shadow had darkened their content, Glenalton used to come through this conservatory from his own room to hers; the window stood invitingly open, and Susan, as she stepped out, whispered to herself,—

"Yes—I will tell him all! all, on my bended knees; and he *must* forgive and love me after that! It was a girl's dream—a folly—I have abjured it—forgot it—and I love him better—ay, even *better* than I fancied I loved the ideal Henry Egerton in those days of romance and vanity. Oh! if it was but over, what peace, what happiness would fill my heart!"

And again Susan's courage failed—the tears filled her eyes—and she leaned against the window which opened into his apartment. As she did so, silent and breathless with her own agitation, a voice smote her ear from within. It startled her—that voice—but she did not speak—it wounded her, but she did not weep—it maddened her, but she never moved. Spell-bound, icy, and motionless, she remained, while the languid sweetness of Caroline Clinton's tones sounded in her ear like the hiss of a serpent.

"Depend upon it, beloved Glenalton," said that familiar voice, "she only intends to deceive you;—it is to hide some plan we know nothing of, that this sudden disregard of the pleasures of the world is assumed. Have I ever been wrong? Did I not warn you of Henry Egerton, and prove it by his letter at the time? Did I not foretell the flirtation with young Frederick Osborne (and who knows but that this calm may be only because he has left town and she can no longer see him?) Vain and flighty she was from her early girlhood, and the world does not mend our hearts."

Glenalton sighed heavily, and Mrs. Clinton continued: "I have told you (and from my heart I believe it) that you will never know rest or comfort till this continual anxiety is over—till, in short—"

She paused, and Lord Glenalton, leaning back in his chair, murmured,—

"I know, Caroline—I know—but I cannot bear that—no divorce—no divorce! It seems to me still that something might be done. I might take her to Scotland and refuse to come to this accursed town."

"You took her to Loch-Lyne *before*," said Caroline Clinton, in a low steady tone.

"I did—and he wrote to her—but she obeyed me—you never could trace another letter to him after I had forbidden it."

"No; yet there were fifty ways in which they might have corresponded with less danger of discovery;—he might have written under cover to some one else—enclosed it to Kate Dalrymple."

"Impossible, Caroline! you cannot think it possible."

"A girl who could so effectually deceive you at the age of seventeen, as to persuade you she was attached to you, might deceive again."

Lord Glenalton groaned—"O Caroline," said he, in a tone of bitter agony, "would to God you had never told me of that previous attachment! Egerton, too! a man of pleasure—a mere dandy! that her heart should have been so corrupted, so frivolous, even then!—then, when I thought it all mine! Oh! that I were still the blind fool I was!" and he flung his arms across the table, and leaned his head above them.

Mrs. Clinton wept, and pressing her lips on the crisp curls of his light hair, she said, in a tone of strong emotion,—"If I had thought you were ignorant of the fact, I never, never would have alluded to it."

"What! you too would have deceived me!" said Lord Glenalton, as he suddenly raised his head.

"How shall I satisfy you?" said Mrs. Clinton, wiping the tears from her eyes; "you reproach me, and I regret having given you pain—and that again

is made a subject of renewed reproach! Oh! would I had never come to live under your roof!"

"Don't wish it, Caroline," said Glenalton, as he took her hands in both his own; "you have been my only comfort for three years past! Forgive me if I am unjust—my head burns so,"—and he pressed the hand he held against his throbbing temples. "Forgive me!" repeated he; "it is not that I am insensible to your feminine sweetness and devotion, but I do so wish something could be done to save *her!*"

"She may be saved yet—she shall! beloved, adored Glenalton! She may not even now be so vain, so weakly vicious as we think;—she is young, and I may have judged her harshly. Alas! how should I judge indulgently of one who still, in spite of all her faults, winds round your heart—that heart, *I* could not earn by adoration from infancy till now! I, Glenalton—I have ever loved only you!"

"I know it—I believe it, Caroline—and would to God I had guessed it then! Would that I had united my fate with yours, and been blessed with your untiring and unswerving love! But you love me still—oh, say that some one loves me, though I have been made the tool of an ambitious girl! Say that *you* love me, Caroline!"

Poor Carry Clinton bent to receive his passionate caress on her colourless cheek, and as she did so, she said, in a low, clear, distinct voice,—

"If you were *free*, then I should *dare* to love you!"

During all this conversation, and long, long after it had taken a different turn, and Lord Glenalton and his cousin had gone out to ride together, as they frequently did, Susan remained leaning motionless against the window-frame. She could not trust the evidence of her own senses, the blackness of the treachery practised towards her was so great. She pressed her hands against her strained eyeballs, and

uncovered them and looked round. She gazed into the lonely and deserted apartment, where she had witnessed that fearful scene. She walked into the room, and touched, one by one, the books—the reading-chair—the mantel-piece—to prove to herself that it was not delusion. Then that cold, benumbed, and miserable mood passed away, and one of wild, irrational, triumphant mirth succeeded.

"There is no bar between us now!—I see it all—I know it all! We shall be friends—we shall be happy—happy—happy! I prayed to God, and he heard my prayer! Glenalton is mine again! There is light and joy in my world for evermore!"

And Susan Glenalton clapped her hands, and laughed hysterically, and wept bitterly—oh! so bitterly!—and laughed again—till she was so wearied out, that she slept.

When she awoke, the day was sinking, and torrents of rain were falling. She rose, and walked with a feeble and exhausted step to the front drawing-room. There, seated at the window, she watched the dim silent shower which shut out the half foliage of the trees in the square; from time to time the growling thunder died away in the distance, and every now and then a carriage rolled rapidly by the door—but no distinct sound or sight was present to Susan Glenalton. She had but one idea—the return of her friend, and her husband. At length a quick gallop over the stones smote her ear, a long double rap resounded through the house—she rose—she started—they had returned!

There are occasions of intense emotion, when we fancy we shall not be able to endure the scene we picture to ourselves; when we imagine we shall betray instantly the grief or anger that is bursting in our hearts, and sink under the bitter trial. The moment comes, and a chilled faintness deadens every faculty; we speak, and move, and smile as we do in our most composed moments,—we gaze without see-

ing,—we answer without hearing our own voices, and no one guesses the inward struggle. Such was the unnatural calmness which fell upon Susan, as she inquired of her treacherous friend whether she was not very wet—listened to her reply, that she was not only drenched to the skin, but shivering dreadfully—and requested her husband to return as soon as he had changed his wet things.

"*I* am not wet, thank you," said Lord Glenalton; "I had a very thick great-coat on, and we stood under cover part of the time. Poor Caroline is wet and chilled; I hope it may not make her seriously ill."

Susan Glenalton laid her hand on her husband's arm, and led him through the conservatory to his room—then pointing to the window, she whispered wildly,—

"Glenalton, I was *there* all the time—this morning—when you talked together."

"Holy Providence!" exclaimed Lord Glenalton, as he started from her hold.

"Oh! don't leave me—it was all false—black and false—I love you, Glenalton—I love no one but you; don't leave me—hear me—only hear me—don't go!"—and as she uttered these broken sentences, Susan fainted at his feet.

It would be needless to describe the scene of reconciliation between these two divided hearts. Suffice it, that peace and happiness were restored, and the trials to which Susan Dalrymple's rashness and imprudence had subjected her, were ended for ever.

The evening of calm and tearful satisfaction was only broken by the thought of the wretched Caroline Clinton, who had suffered so severely from exposure to the wet and cold, as to labour for some days under a fever, which it required both skill and watching to prevent proving fatal.

Susan watched and tended her. She was too happy, too grateful to Providence, not to forgive even this her worst enemy—and Caroline Clinton recovered.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Happy are they who win thee, meek-eyed Peace!
Rather than live where thou wert banished,
I would go down into the quiet tomb."

M.S.

Days had passed away since the invalid had been able to come down-stairs. It was time that she should learn the events of that unhappy day when her illness commenced.

"Caroline, you are better now, you are nearly well," said Lady Glenalton, after a long silence, during which both had been gazing from the window by which the sofa was placed, to the dusty foliage of the trees in the square.

"Yes, love, I am quite well; I only want strength now," replied Mrs. Clinton as she pressed her friend's hand.

Susan drew away her hand, and a cold chill sank on her heart. When she spoke again, it was in that low peculiar tone which people involuntarily assume when struggling with strong emotion.

"I have waited," said she, "till you were recovered, to tell you that it is *our* intention to go to Loch-Lyne immediately; and as the time of our return is quite uncertain, I thought—"

Susan Glenalton paused; she had glanced on the countenance of the invalid, and saw that it was deadly pale. After a few moments, she continued,—

"If you would like to stay here till you are quite strong again, you can do so. You will have an opportunity of arranging your—your plans, and of seeking another home without the hurry or anxiety which—"

Again Susan paused. False, and cruel, and black-hearted as her friend had proved, she *was* the friend of

her early days; she had been a favourite with her lost parents—had shared the same home for three years—and all the consciousness of the bitter wrong which had been suffered and felt by Lady Glenalton, could not prevent her voice faltering over those words of banishment. The thick blinding tears which we strive to prison back rose to her eyes, and the trees and houses on which she gazed grew large, and dim, and indistinct. She felt desolate and forsaken. Injury may wound and be forgiven; insult may sting and be forgotten; but treachery bewilders and chills us, and we know, even while we struggle to pardon, that for *that* there is no oblivion. A brightness and a melody has gone from our lives when once we feel we have been betrayed; an asp has sprung from amid the flowers of our paradise, and we can never more tread there as fearlessly and gladly as before; *trust*, that blessed portion of youth and inexperience, hath been driven from its strong hold in our hearts, and a few moments have sufficed to change us for ever! Happy are those who comprehend not the feelings of Susan Glenalton as she sat by the side of Mrs. Clinton! Happy are they, for there is no suffering so bitter as the knowledge that those we loved have deceived us.

Whom shall we trust, since they could betray? whom shall we turn to, since they could not feel for us? how shall we obtain peace when they have planted thorns in our path? A blank and desolate wilderness seems spread around us—the voices of those who speak to us sound harsh and sad—we wake up evermore in the mornings with less gladness—we lie down to rest at night with less quiet—our very hearts seem frozen in our bosoms—they have poured out the fountain of their love on the desert sand, and it hath yielded neither fruit nor freshness!

Such, so vague and so wretched, were the thoughts which agitated the heart of Lady Glenalton.

There was a dreary silence, and Mrs. Clinton was the first to break it—"Really," said she, but Susan

stopped her. "Let us have no explanations, Caroline; it would be worse than useless; my resolution is taken —we must part—let us part without discussion;" and as she dashed away the long-gathered tears, she added, in a firmer tone, "I am sure you understand *me*, and unhappily I at length understand you. We go to Moorfields to-morrow, and from thence to Loch-Lyne."

Susan Glenalton turned as Mrs. Clinton half-raised herself on the sofa; she fancied Caroline Clinton was about to take farewell of her, and touched at the thought of bidding adieu *for the last time* to one who had been so long her companion, she held out her hand, and raised her eyes to her former friend's countenance. Its expression startled her. With a cold and mocking smile Caroline Clinton bowed, as if declining the proffered farewell; and with a tone as calm, as sweet, and as self-possessed as ever she had spoken to Lady Glenalton, she said, "I cannot refuse to understand you, and, in the step you are about to take, you have only to please yourself; but considering that you married Glenalton without having the smallest preference for him; and that for the greater part of the time I have known you, you have scarcely seemed aware of his existence, certainly not of his occupations or pursuits; I must say, I think it a little late, and a little ridiculous to begin *now* being jealous of him—however, as I said before, please yourself; I shall remain here for one week, and when you return, you can play 'the Wife' in the prettiest manner.—Good-by."

Her tone was even more slow than usual, and with the last words she leaned her head back again in its languid position. Susan remained for a few minutes riveted to the spot with amazement; her heart was more steeled against her old friend by this short sentence than by all that had gone before. She turned and left the apartment, and from that time Caroline Clinton was a stranger to her.

Years rolled away. Lady Glenalton became a happy

and contented wife—a proud and affectionate mother. Henry Egerton daudled away his life in a series of small passions for the new beauties of each succeeding season—travelled to Constantinople, and wrote a tour professing to describe the countries he had seen; but, in truth, giving a list of the conquests he had made among "the dark-eyed daughters of the east." Mrs. Wilmot ran away with a young officer, with whom she lived in great poverty, and who ill used her exceedingly. Her husband fought her seducer—not for running away with her, but for his subsequent ill-treatment of his once-beloved and still beautiful Clara. The officer was shot; a small pension was settled on the wretched Mrs. Wilmot; her husband fled, and lived on the Continent, nervous, heart-broken, and forgotten—except, now and then, when the story of his interference in the treatment of his wife by the man she had preferred to him was told as a good jest, and some one of his old companions, carelessly pushing round the bottle, ventured an inquiry of—"He's alive now, somewhere, isn't he?"

I once saw Lady Glenalton in after life. It was on the wedding-day of her daughter, a beautiful young woman, whose frank and modest countenance strongly reminded me of what her mother had been.

"Georgia is three-and-twenty to-day," said she to me. "I did right, don't you think so, Glenalton, not to bring her out so very early, and marry her so young as is the custom? She has had time to form a steady preference, grounded on reason and reflection. She has had time to see that vanity is not happiness, and to grow sufficiently weary of the world's amusements to feel the full value of home. She *begins* her woman's career with all the experience I bought so slowly; though I must say," added she, with half a sigh, and a sweet appealing smile to her husband, "Georgia is naturally steadier than I was when a girl."

Lord Glenalton kissed the fading cheek of his wife, and said gently—"I only wish that when her husband

has been married for four-and-twenty years, he may be as happy as I am now—as happy as you have made me!"

I looked round: I saw their son, Lord Loch-Lyne, a noble and stately youth, proudly gazing on the bride as she took farewell of her companions; I saw the bride herself, with her mantling cheek, and hurried and regretful glances, half tears, half smiles, go round that loving circle of friends, and whisper sweet words to all. I saw the kindly brow of her husband bent on her with triumphant love. There were no scenes, no fainting fits, no affected timidity, no refusal to appear at the wedding-breakfast; all was quiet and happy: and when her dark eyes met mine, although she blushed, she did not withdraw them; she was not ashamed to let her mother's old friend read in that glance that she was married to her heart's content.

"This is a prosperous match," said I to an old dandy who stood near me, making the agreeable to a little fair giggling girl, who was pulling a magnolia to pieces. "I should think it would turn out well."

"He must needs be an excellent prophet who could tell how a marriage would turn out," said the person I addressed, as he arranged an excellently-contrived wig at the glass, and compared his appearance with that of a gray-haired gentleman of his own age who stood by him; "but I should think it probable Lady Glenalton's daughter might make a good wife."

By a curious coincidence, the old dandy in the wig to whom I addressed the observation, and who was so occupied with the little fair girl, was—Henry Egerton.

THE END.

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